

PLUPPY

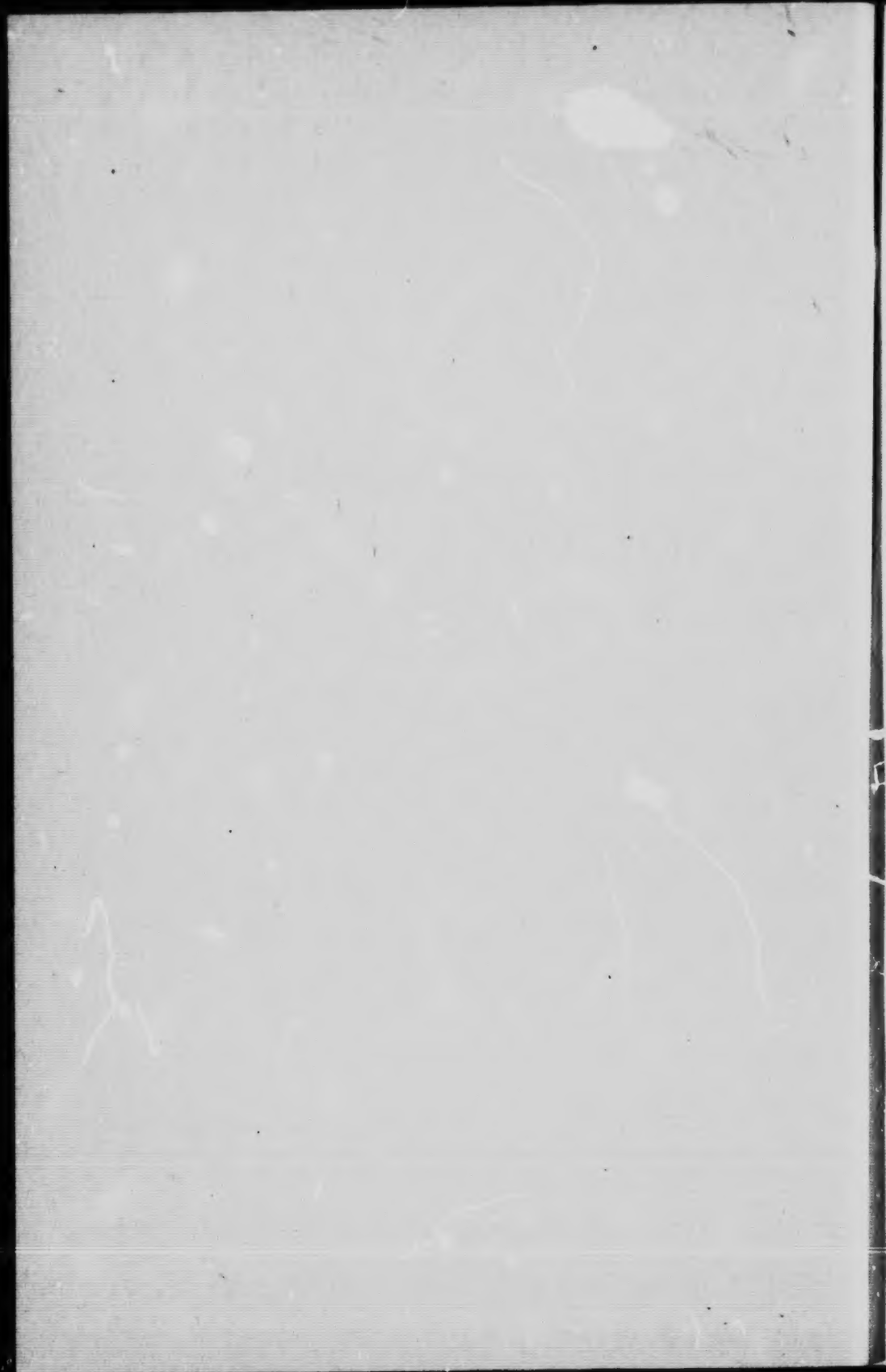
"THE REAL BOY"



HENRY A. SHUTE

Gombarten

21st Sept 1911







PLUPY

THE REAL BOY









*"Deep in Plupy's heart dwelt a mighty
indignation"*

PLUPY

"THE REAL BOY"

HENRY A. SHUTE

*Author of "The Diary of a Real Boy,"
"Farming It," etc., etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY

WARREN ROCKWELL

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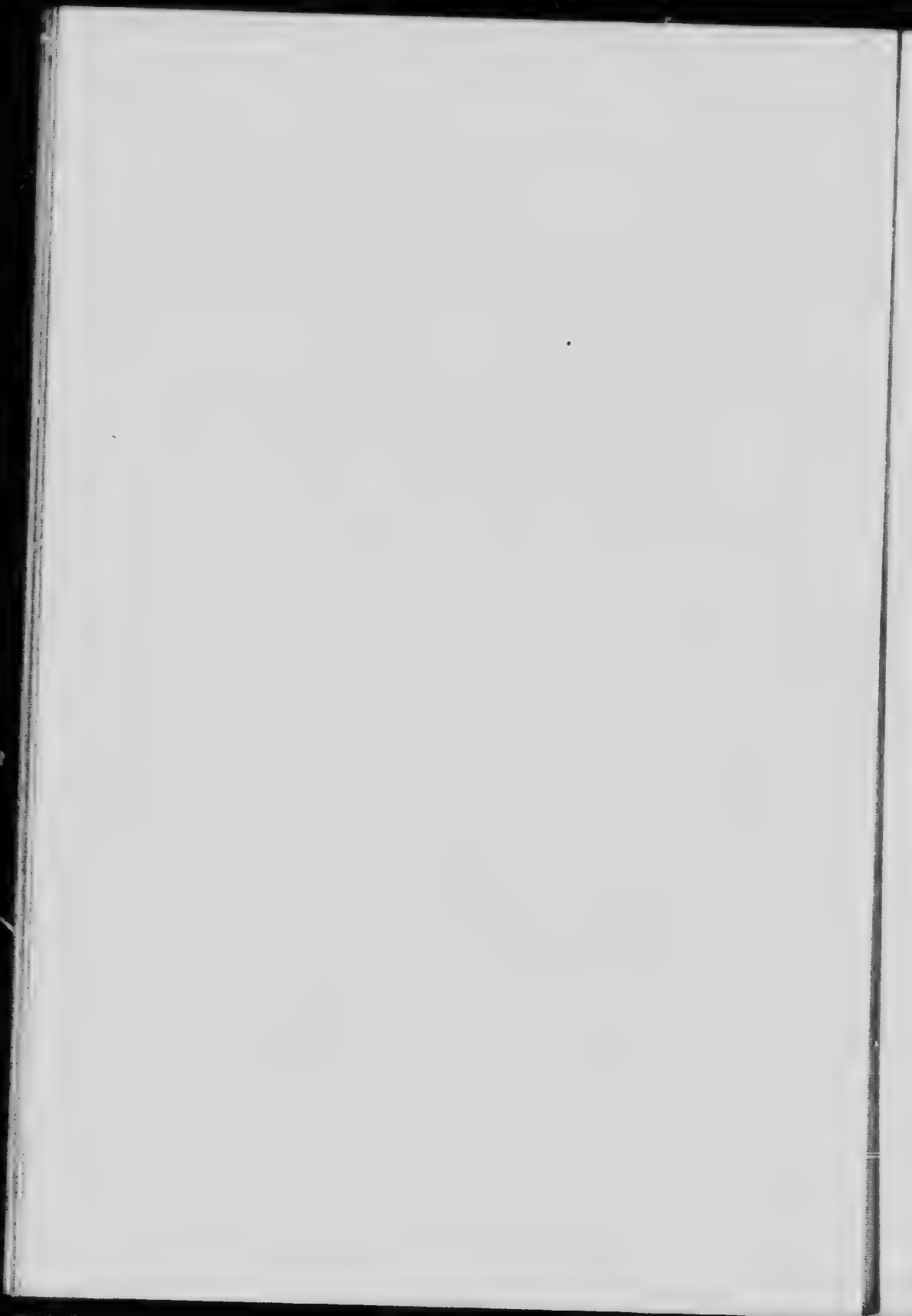
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PLUPY

"THE REAL BOY"

CHAPTER I

"Life is one darn thing after another."

PLUPY was grumpy. There was no doubt of it. Anyone who saw him as he sat on the fence in front of his house, dangling his long legs in the air, or idly drumming his heels on the boards, scowling fiercely at the world, would have known that deep in his heart dwelt a mighty indignation.

The day had begun inauspiciously for him. He had forgotten to split his kindlings the night before and had incurred condign punishment that seemed to him unjust and wholly out of proportion to the offense.

If his father had whipped him he would have gotten over it long before this. But he had ordered him to stay in the yard all day. And he had promised to go fishing with Pewt and

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

Potter, and Pewt knew where there were some bully perch, old lunkers. He almost wished his father was dead. Anyway his father would be sorry when he was dead. That was just the way, nothing ever went right. What did he have to split up kindlings for anyway? Why didn't they come all split.

If people only knew enough to cut down little trees instead of big ones, they would be little enough for kindlings anyway, and it was easier to cut up little ones than big ones. When he was a man he would never make his boy split kindlings, but would buy them all split.

He bet his father would feel bad if he drowned himself. He guessed he would miss him when he was gone. And his mother too, she might have said something when his father told him to stay in.

He pictured himself lying dead in the river with the boats full of people with boat-hooks and eel spears, and the banks lined with other pale-faced scared people, and he pictured himself brought home limp and dripping, and

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

brought into the house amid the cries and groans of his family and the loud self-reproaches of his father, the father that had driven him to this dreadful death.

And he drew so affecting a picture of their unavailing grief that the tears filled his eyes and a lump arose in his throat as big as the yarn covered, rubber-cored ball in his pocket.

As his swimming eyes roamed wistfully around in search of something to lighten the dreary monotony of staying in the yard all day, they fell on the huge old apple tree whose deep-green leaves stirred slightly in the light breeze, and were dappled all over by flecks of golden sunshine.

Suddenly a thought struck him, the green apples were just large enough to throw with an elastic switch. "Bully," he would be the first to do it this season. He sprang from the fence and started for the tree. Then a most unusual spasm of obedience struck him. "Mother," he called, "Mother-er-er," he shrieked, as she did not immediately answer.

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

"What is it?" a voice replied from the house.

"Kin I plug some green apples with a stick?"

"Why, y-e-e-s, I think so," his mother replied, somewhat doubtfully, "only," she continued, "don't throw them at people and don't break any windows."

"All right, mother," he replied, swarming up the tree for a limber switch. The tree, a high old Baldwin, was too large for his arms and legs to go around, although they were of abnormal length and thinness for a boy of his age, but as it bent slightly to the east and as there was a cavity about eight feet from the ground, it was climbed in this ingenious manner.

Plupy stepped upon the wooden railing around the current bushes which was nailed to the tree, from there sprang straddlewise up the trunk until his fingers reached the cavity, where he squirmed and inched and twisted himself along until he reached the bend in the tree whence he could pull himself up by the branches.

When he had selected a suitable withe he found he had left his knife in the house, where-

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

upon he began to yell for someone to bring it out. "Keene, Cele, Georgie," he shouted, until one of the young ladies mentioned, a black-eyed, saucy-looking, round-faced girl, appeared in a blue checked apron with a dish-cloth and a plate in her hands.

"Whatcher howlin' like that for, Harry?" she asked in a tone of indignant remonstrance, "Whatcher want?"

"Wantcher to gwup in my room n' git my jack knife. S'in my linen britches."

"Guess if you want it, you can go 'n get it yerself. I'm washin' dishes."

"Oh, gollong n' git it, wontcher? don't be so mean," urged Plupy.

"Go yerself, I won't" said Keene decidedly, turning her back on the suppliant, "I won't."

"Mother-er!" shouted Plupy, "can't Keene just gwup and get my knife for me?"

"Why," said the much-wanted woman, "I should think she might."

"Ma, he can go jesswell as I, he hasn't anything to do and I'm jest as busy as I can be,"

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

said Keene, attacking a platter with a great splash of water.

"Make her, mother, she jes does it to be mean. I don't believe I can get up here again in a week," said Plupy.

"Come, Keene," said her mother good naturedly, "run up and get his knife." Whereupon that young lady with a frown and a defiant swing of her square shoulders, walked upstairs with some rather unnecessary noise, but soon returned saying she couldn't find his old knife.

"T'was right in the pocket of my linen britches," said Plupy, "betcher didn't look."

"Did too," asserted the young lady.

"Cornelia," said her mother with a warning light in her eyes, "go straight upstairs and bring down Harry's knife."

There was but one reply to this argument, and in a trice "Cornelia" mounted the stairs and returned with the knife, which she tossed indignantly to her grinning brother, who caught it deftly, and jeeringly said, "Ya-ah-ya-ah, had to, didn't yer?"



*Cornelia tossed the knife to
her grinning brother*



PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

"Smarty, you wait and see," replied black-eyes, tossing her head and returning to her dishes.

Left alone, Plupy cut a stout but limber switch and carefully trimmed off the twigs and leaves, whistling shrilly a popular band tune, Then he whittled the end to a sharp point on which to impale his projectiles. If he could only harden the end in fire it wouldn't split and would last longer.

There was Sam Dyer's blacksmith shop just across the garden, but then he couldn't go out of the yard. Perhaps, however, Sam would harden it for him. So he dropped his switch to the ground where he speedily followed it, letting himself down from a bending branch.

Arrived at the boundary fence he climbed to the top rail and accosted the blacksmith who was sousing a hot iron in the water trough.

"Mr. Dyer," he said with more deference than he generally used in accosting that gentleman, "wilyer please hold the end of this stick in your fire a minute, jest to harden it."

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

Mr. Dyer looked up with a momentary frown. His experience with Plupy had been somewhat extensive and of such a nature as to put him in a condition of being constantly on guard. But he was an extremely good natured and simple hearted man and his frown was speedily chased away by a cheerful grin.

"Why, in course, in course, sonny, come right over," he said hospitably.

"No, you do it, I can't come over, gotter stay in the yard all day," said Plupy, shame-facedly.

"Watcher bin doin naou?" queried Sam.

"Didn't split no kindlins las night."

"H'm, that all?" said the blacksmith leaning on his smutty arms on the fence, "didn't know but yer'd bin breakin' winders or ringin' door-bells er suthin' like that."

"No, honest, now, twant nothin' but jest that," affirmed Plupy, "hope to die and cross my throat," he added, drawing his fingers cross-wise over his skinny neck, which with the boys was then and may possibly be now the most solemn oath possible.

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

"Well," said Sam, "gimme yer stick an' I'll singe it for ye," and he obligingly did so, returning it with the point in quite a delightfully adamant condition.

Plupy, in great elation, thanked him and ran back to the apple tree where he filled his pockets with hard green apples of about the size of bantam's eggs. Then choosing one he tentatively bit it, made a wry face and spat. It was sour and bitter. Then, impaling it on the point of his withe, he lightly swung the switch into the air to try its temper, then gave it a throwing motion with all the strength of his arm.

"Whoof," sang the withe as it cut through the air. Away went the apple with an audible hum, leaving the point at just the right moment. Away, away it soared, ascending for an incredible distance, where it passed out of sight among the trees.

Another was tried with equal success. The third left the point too soon and ascended perpendicularly until it was lost to sight, then fell in the next yard. Plupy forgot all his troubles,

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

he was happy. But whenever a boy has anything to throw projectiles with, be it a bean blower, pop-gun, bow 'narrer, arrow-rifle or slingshot, some sort of a target is necessary for perfect enjoyment.

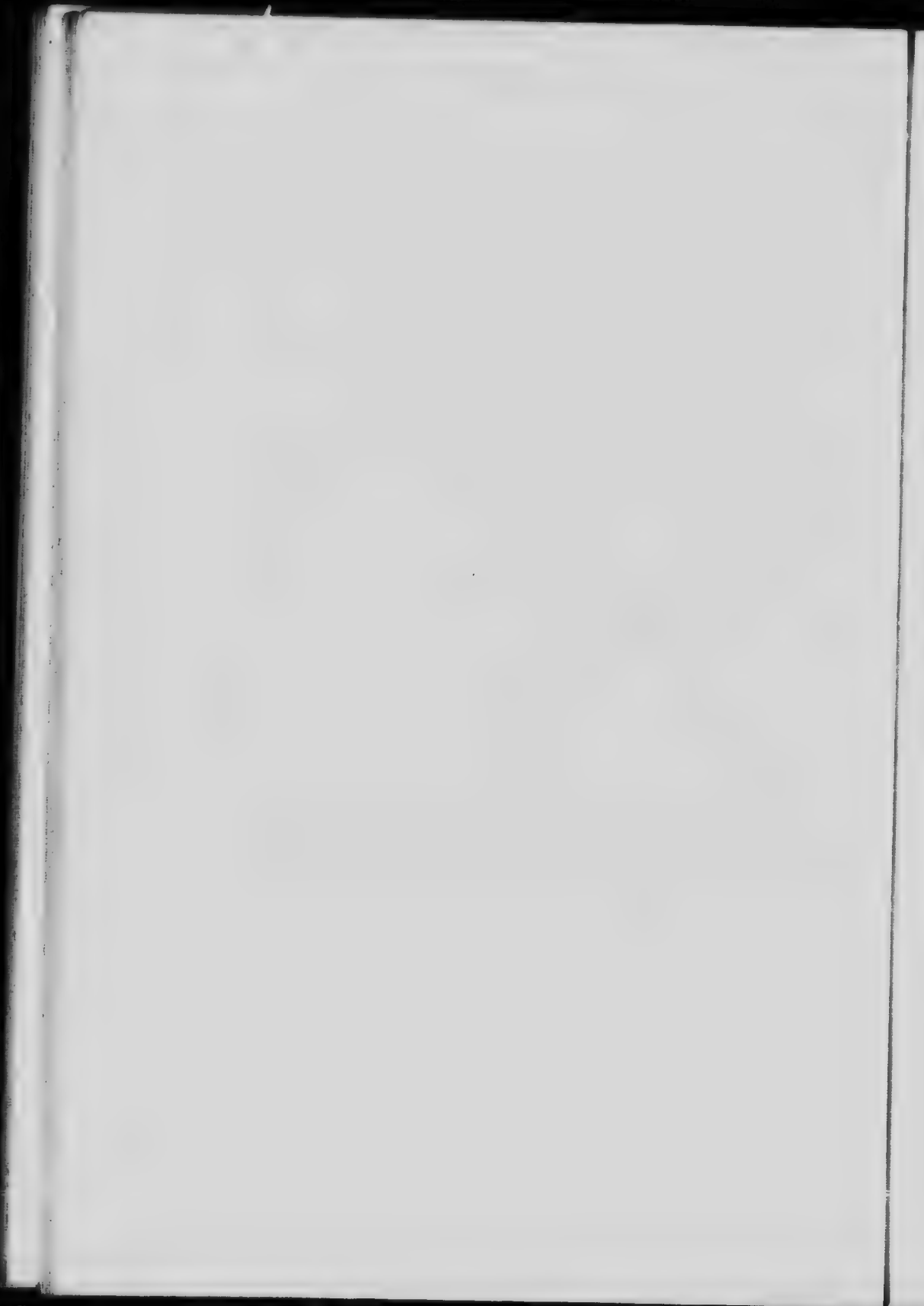
And so after trying long distance shots for a while, Plupy began to look about for something to hit. He soon found it. Across two gardens, nearly one hundred yards away, sat two men on a fence. They had been hired to work in a neighbor's garden, and in the absence of that neighbor, were improving their time by political discussion. The fact that they were doing wrong in neglecting their employer's work was no reason why Plupy should seek to even up matters by using them as a target.

But so he did, and with poor success for a while. The shots went like lightning, but wide of the mark. At last Plupy began to get the range and finally, to his intense delight, a hard round apple took one of the disputants a prodigious thump on the back of his head.

In an instant he sprang from the fence with



*At last Plupy began
to get the range*



PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

a whoop, and came charging toward the place from which the missile had come, pouring out blasphemies and threats. Plupy dodged behind the fence and dived into the barn to a hiding place near a small window, through which he could see old Seth Tanner's performance, which was that frantic gentleman's name. Across the street came Skinny Bruce and Tady Finton, whistling and wholly unconscious of approaching doom.

CHAPTER II

"And I'll tell in simple language what I know about the
row
That broke up our society upon the Stanislaw."
Harte.

SEEING the enraged Tanner charging them with horrid curses, they stopped, not to argue the matter or to inquire his intentions. His warlike demonstrations were enough. They fled, he followed. They crawled under the fence, he jumped over. They dived under a big beach wagon standing in front of the blacksmith's shop, he was compelled to go around, and fell over the pole, which, while it added fresh fuel to his wrath and great fluency to his vocal attainments, gave them a few rods start, and though he rose and followed cursing, he never had a ghost of a show of overtaking them.

As he passed from sight and his frantic invectives died away in the distance, Plupy came



*They stopped not to argue the matter
or inquire his intentions*



PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

forth from his hiding place, where he had been rolling in convulsions of sinful mirth, hunted up his withe, got a fresh supply of green apples and watched for new game.

An occasional shot at a dog or cat kept time from dragging too heavily, but were barren of result. At last, however, a glorious opportunity came. Old Si Smith's big white dog came trotting along the road. Now old Shep was a rather savage old brute and the boys gave him a wide berth. But this opportunity was too good to be lost, and Plupy, hastily impaling the hardest and best apple he had, took aim and let drive with all his strength, intending to give the unconscious animal a most tremendous thump.

Alas! the furious energy of the stroke dislodged the apple a thought too soon, and instead of striking the dog, it flew a bit high and went through the window of the blacksmith shop like a bullet from a gun, causing in the breast of the honest and well-meaning blacksmith sentiments of keen astonishment, profound sorrow and righteous indignation.

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

In a trice he had doffed his leather apron, rolled down his sleeves and sallied from his shop to lodge a complaint at the door of Plupy's house, to which citadel that prudent youth promptly retired at the first jingle of flying glass.

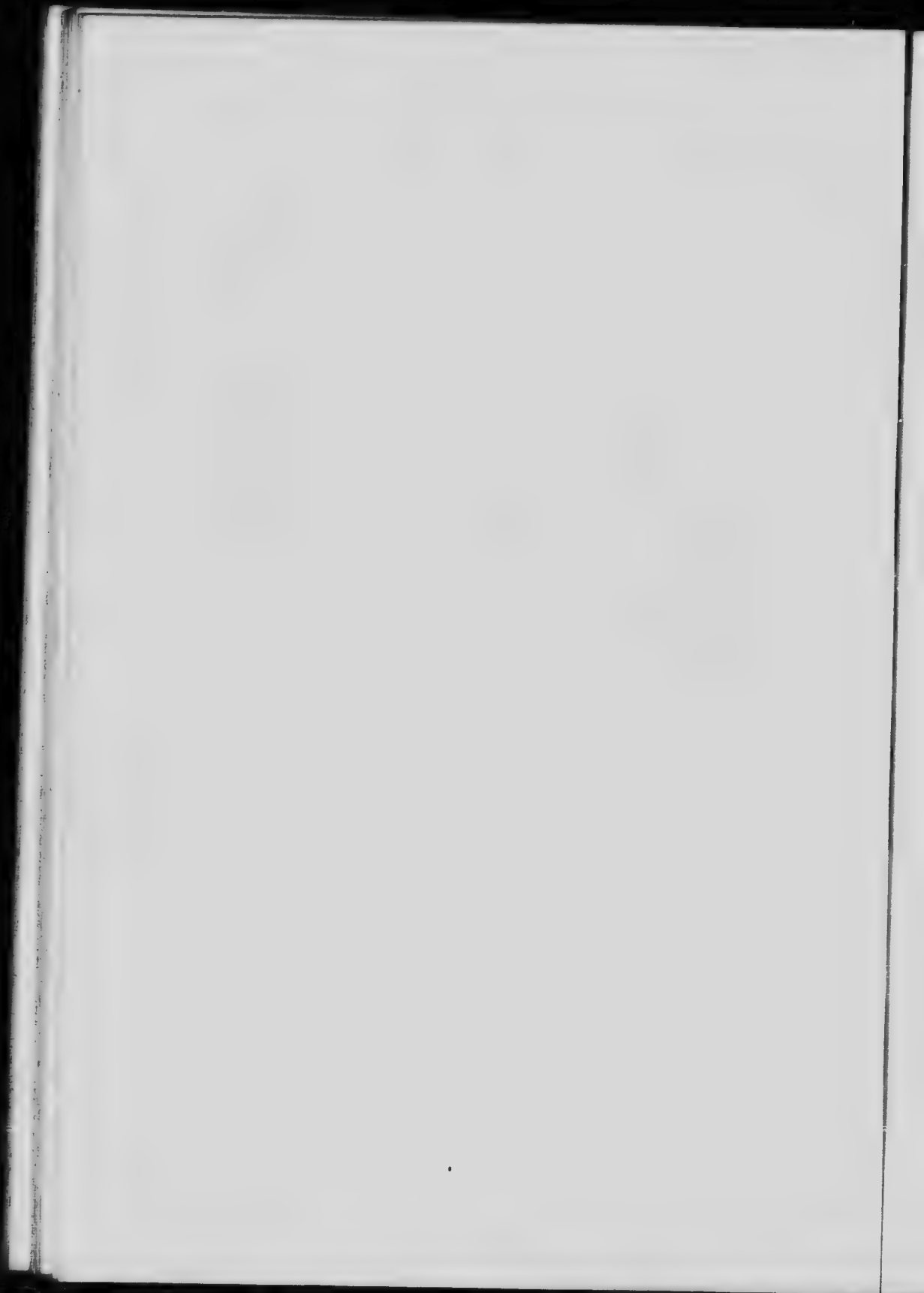
"Naou, Mrs. Shute," said this much-trying individual, "I don't think it jest right. This tarnal son of yours got me this mawnin' to fix him a stick for firin' apples 'n what duz he dew but go a firin' rocks right threw my winder. Naou I've got to jes go 'n hire sum'un to mend that winder, 'n pay 'em fifteen cents jes likes not. Naou whaddier think on 't?"

"Well, Mr. Dyer," said that much-trying matron kindly, "I am quite sure Harry did not intend to break your window, and especially after your kindness to him. I think if he was intending to break a window he would not do it quite so near home," she added. "Harry," she called, "come down here."

Plupy reappeared, having been leaning over the banisters listening with all his ears, and now



"Naou, whaddier think on't?"



PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

began to justify his mother's confidence by vociferous explanation.

"Honest now, mother, I didn't mean to plug his window. I was jest letting ding at old Si Smith's dog, 'n it slipped, 'n went through Sam's window."

"Mr. Dyer," she corrected quietly.

"Yes 'um, Mister Dyer," hastily assented Plupy.

"W-a-a-a-l," said the mollified blacksmith, "I spusso. I seen that air cussed dog 'n I wuz agoin' to fire a rock at him myself. In course ye'll pay fer my winder, Mrs. Shute, slongs, Harry broke it."

"Oh, yes, of course, Mr. Dyer, how much will it be?"

"W-a-a-a-l," he drawled making a mental calculation, "seems sough a feller had orter git 'bout twenty-five cents for getting mos scart to death 'n hevin' a winder broke."

"That is certainly reasonable, Mr. Dyer," said Plupy's mother, handing him a ten and a fifteen cent script. "It will of course, Harry,

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

come out of your cornet money, and will, I hope, teach you to be more careful," she continued, whereat Plupy looked very much disgusted, as the accumulation of a fund sufficient to purchase a cornet had been the darling ambition of his young life.

All interest in life had now departed, and he listlessly dragged his shambling length to the front fence and slowly climbed upon the top rail where he sat moodily dangling his legs and musing upon the dreadful accumulation of disappointments and outrages to which he was peculiarly subject. Life was hard indeed. Other fellows have luck, he didn't.

As he sat there in moody silence, Pewt and Potter, returning from their fishing trip, jubilantly hailed him and held up each a string of kivers and small perch with a few undersized pickerel.

"Ya-ah, Plupy," roared Pewt derisively, "thotcher was going with us."

"Huh, couldn't, father made me stay in 'cause I didn't split my kinlins," said Plupy re-

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

sentfully, glowering at the remembrance of his wrongs.

"That's too bad, Plupy," said Potter sympathetically.

"That so, Plupy, your old man's meaner'n tripe. I heard old man Collins say he cheated him and he had orter be hung."

Now Plupy, however indignant he might feel with his father in his own small bosom, did not allow his good name to be traduced, and he promptly called Pewt a liar, who instantly retorted that Plupy was another, and that his father was a bigger one. Plupy, although he might have passed over the personal application of the term, could not forgive it as applied to his father and flopped from his perch and assumed a ludicrous posture of offense, with one arm extended and one crossed over his chin, the middle joint of his third and little finger projecting beyond the others, which was supposed to give a cutting edge to his fists that nothing but brass knuckles could exceed.

Pewt promptly dropped his pole and string

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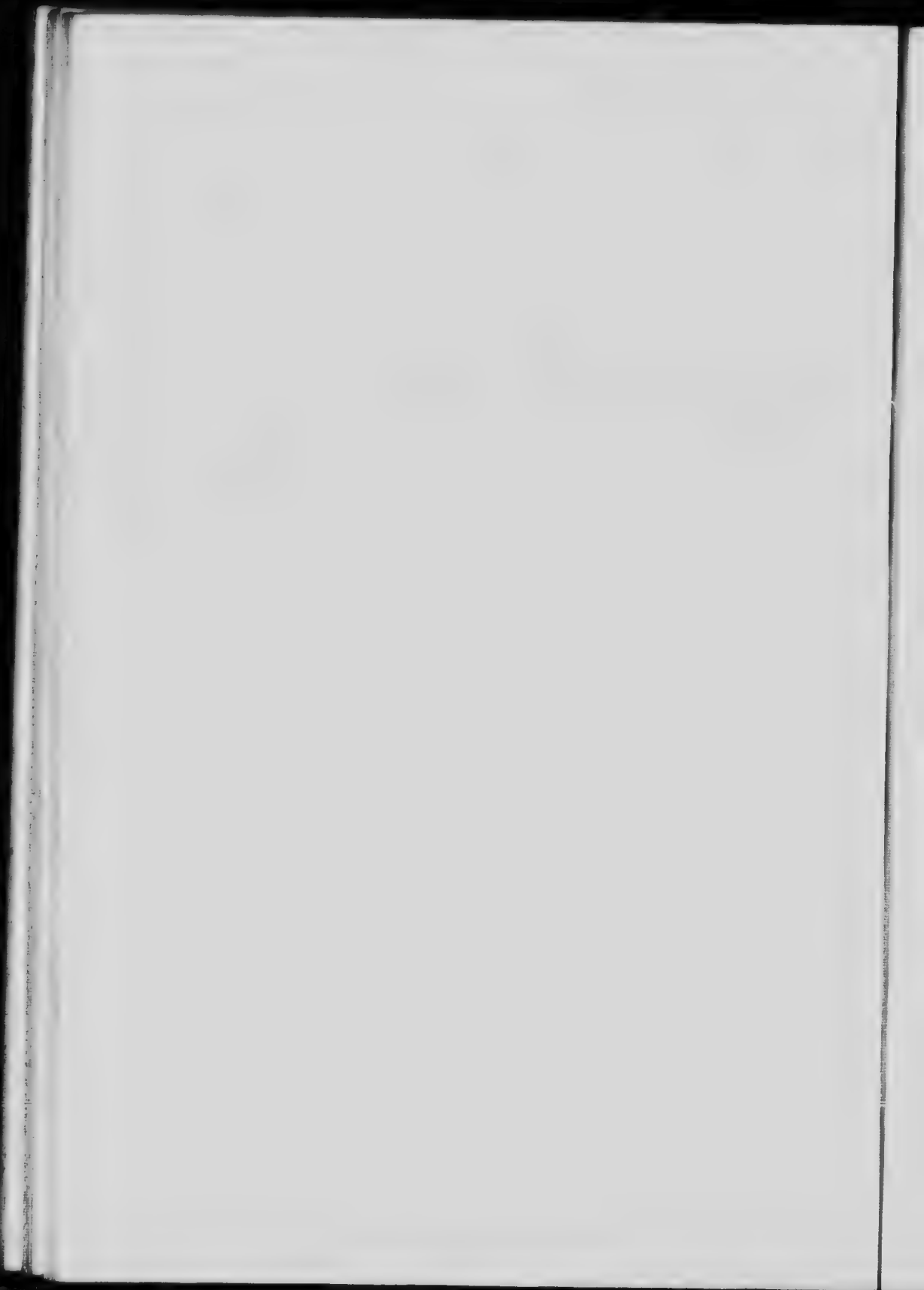
of fish and threw himself into an attitude of defence, doubling his fists more tightly than Plupy, but projecting the middle joint of the second finger, a proceeding which was popularly supposed to be very conducive to black eyes.

At these warlike demonstrations, several stable loafers and hostlers, who had been dozing in the sun in front of the stables, woke up and urged the boys, who were warily circling round each other, to sail in. As this encouragement did not precipitate matters, someone pushed Plupy violently into Pewt, who received him with vigorous punches. The fight was on. Plupy swung his arms like the spokes of a wheel. Pewt delivered sidewinders, rib-roasters and semi-circular digs. They clinched, writhed, twisted and fell, Pewt uppermost.

Plupy's legs wildly waved in the air vainly seeking purchase, then doubled under him. His stomach rose like a bow, there was a violent twist and Pewt was turned. But he squirmed out and they half rose, punching, pulling hair and twisting like eels, down they rolled off the



The crowd woke up at these ar-like demonstrations



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sidewalk, Pewt again underneath, but they were pulled apart by more scientific bystanders and told to stand up like men.

At it they went, each one apparently trying to put in as many blows in a given time as he could, a clinch, a twist, and a fall. Again they grovel in the dust. Plupy tries to pull out every spear of Pewt's stringy and copious thatch; Pewt tries to obliterate all signs of humanity from Plupy's freckled countenance.

It looked as if both would be successful when suddenly there was an abrupt change of sentiment in the crowd, and old Mike Hartnett, who had been the most active in egging on hostilities, tore them apart with stern reproaches, just as Plupy's mother appeared, called from the duty of putting to sleep a wakeful baby by Keene's staccato shrieks of "Harry's a fightin', Harry's a fightin'," and took forcible possession of the most demoralized youth imaginable. His jacket was covered with dust and dragged over his head, one leg of his trousers pulled to his knee, his hair standing every way, his mouth

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swollen and his face scratched.

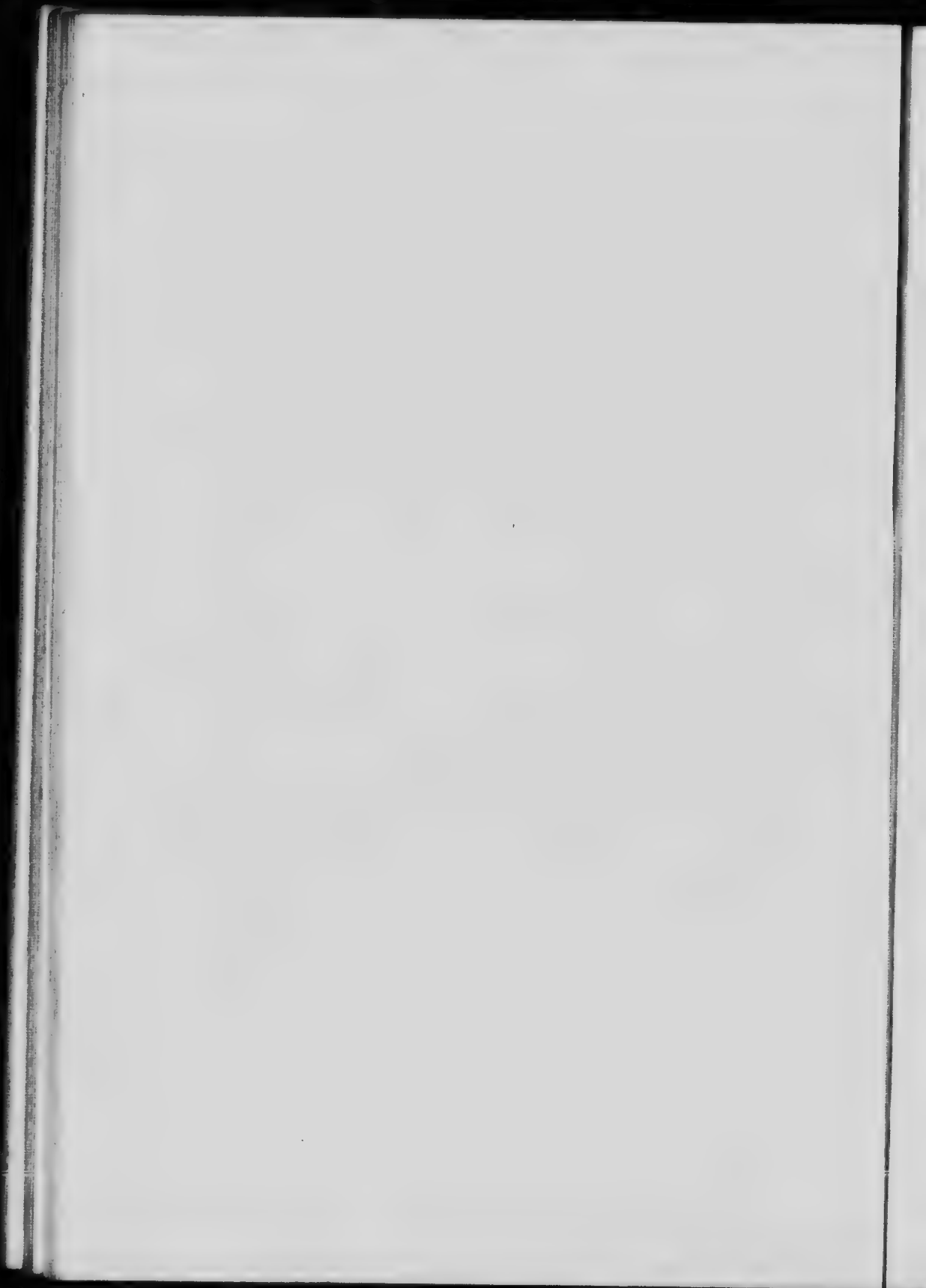
Pewt was also in the most astonishing condition possible, and looked as if he had been shaken up in a corncracker.

Plupy was hurried to the house by his horrified mother, notwithstanding his protestations and excuses, and sent to his room to spend the rest of the day in solitary confinement. He felt that this was unjust, but he recked not of injustice. He had played the man, and the deep and unspoken satisfaction that comes of a duty well done swelled up in his breast and filled him with a sweet elation.

But he soon began to be uneasy. He was imprisoned. The outside world never before seemed so beautiful, so alluring. It seemed as though he must get out. He would. He listened. Everything was quiet about the house. Keene and Cele had gone over to Lucy Watson's, Georgie was in Aunt Clark's side of the house, Frankie and Annie were taking their afternoon naps, and the soft creak of his mother's rocking-chair as she sung them to sleep was the



Plup's mother took forcible possession



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only sound in the house.

Outside the rhythmic tink, tink of the blacksmith's hammer was heard. He rose and peered out of the window. Nobody in sight. If he could only get down the back way, but his mother would see him. The front stairway led by his aunt's room. If he only had a rope he could let himself out of the window like Tom Bailey in the "Story of a Bad Boy." There used to be a clothesline in the back closet. He tiptoed into the entry and back to the closet. Bully, it was there, two long pieces. He would take them both to be sure. Back he went to the chamber and stealthily let them out of the window. Either was long enough.

Hastily but quietly he tied one end of a rope to the bed post and tried it. It held. Then he carefully knotted the other end round his waist. He was not going to run the risk of warming his hands the way Tom Bailey did. He knew better than that. You bet he did.

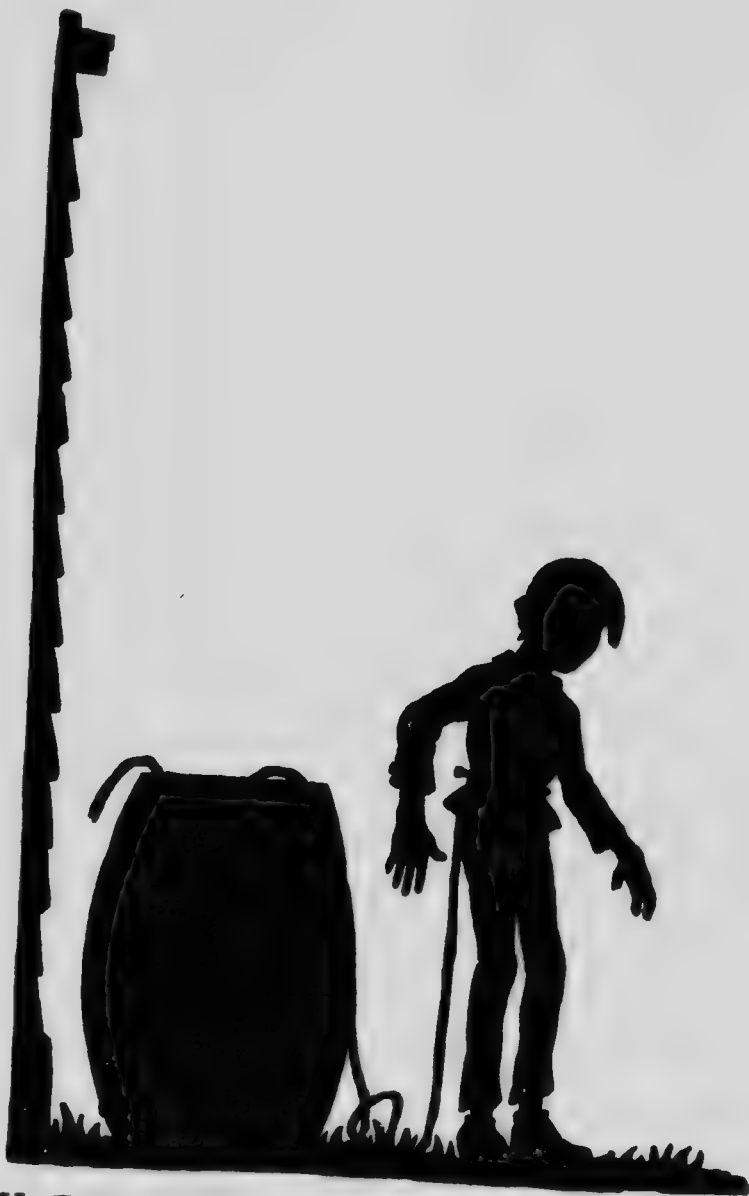
Then he stuck his head out of the window. Nobody in sight. He drew it in and then

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slowly and carefully a long thin leg came over the window sill, then another, followed by a lanky body. There was a pause and then he cautiously grasped the rope and let himself drop. There was a wild clutch for the window, a yell, and a tremendous splash, and the open rain-water hogshead, filled to the brim with tepid water, received him and charitably hid him from sight.

He had tied the wrong rope round his waist.

And when the bewildered mother came running to the door with her rudely awakened and blinking baby in her arms, she beheld her graceless and dripping son climbing out of the rain barrel, his hair plastered down on his scratched face, and his dripping garments clinging close to his skinny limbs and emphasizing the ludicrous lines of his figure.



He had tied the wrong rope

CHAPTER III

"There was an old woman
Who lived in a shoe
She had so many children
She didn't know what to do."

—Mother Goose.

JUST what kind of settlement poor Plupy had with his father on his return from Boston that night is known only to Plupy and his father.

Before pitying the young man too much it would be well to remember that the elder Shute was more than locally famous for a keen sense of humor, and in his boyhood had done perhaps more than his fair share in turning the village of Exeter upside down. So it is fair to suppose that a graphic description of old Seth Tanner profanely chasing two wholly innocent but active boys, and the further portrayal of his son climbing dripping from the rain-water barrel would tend to put him in so

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cheerful a humor as to practically disarm hostility to that graceless youth.

Whatever he thought or did in the matter, he made no objection when Plupy's mother, according to her custom in such cases, prepared a most appetizing meal and carried it up to the imprisoned youth.

Indeed, Plupy's father as he sat that evening under the apple tree smoking, laughed heartily now and then and indulged in sinful delight in reminiscences of his boyhood, which showed him to be in the most cheerful humor.

It was open to suspicion whether or not he was delighted beyond measure at the good account his son had rendered of himself in his fight with Pewt, as he was heard to remark that if he would only lick that Watson boy too he would be satisfied.

The family of which Plupy was a most prominent if not strictly ornamental member, was the most delightful family imaginable. The father, Mr. George Shute, a tall, handsome, well-built and athletic man, was a clerk in the Boston Cus-

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tom House, to which municipality he betook himself at a very early hour, and returned at 5.30 P. M. He knew everyone on the train, had a keen shaft of wit or a jolly laugh for everyone. His duties in the office consisted mainly in telling amusing stories, and making semi-occasional entries in a huge ledger.

That these duties were of a very important nature was evident from the fact that he was a well-paid official. His family was, however, numerous and hearty to such an astonishing degree that his income was barely sufficient for their combined wants.

Mrs. Shute, Joe as he called her was a rather plump woman, with a strong, handsome, and most kindly face. She was an active, strong, and constant worker, giving her whole time to the care and management of her family, and having no time for outside matters. A fine pianist, she never had time to play. A beautiful alto singer, her voice was seldom heard except in singing cradle songs to the younger children.

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Aunt Sarah, a sister of Mrs. Shute, was one of those rare examples of an utterly unselfish woman, who gave her entire energies to the welfare of others, and in particular to the swarm of Shute children, every one of whom was in her eyes the most beautiful, the most accomplished and the most obedient of children.

How such an opinion was possible in the mind of any person of good sense is not clear to the unprejudiced mind. Although certainly given to vagaries in relation to these children, in all other respects she was unquestionably of sound mind and memory.

She indulged these children lavishly, which was not good for them, and the only times she lost her temper in the household was on the frequent occasions when the elder Shute, accompanied by a strap and the reluctant Plupy, retired to the woodshed for important business transactions, when she retired precipitately, and with indignant looks, to her chamber and banged the door.

Again, she never would believe the com-



*When the elder Shute and the reluctant
Plupy retired to the woodshed*

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plaints of any persons, however irreproachable their character, who reported misdemeanors of her nephews and nieces, and even when subsequent confessions were made by the malefactors, she obstinately maintained that they were wrung from them by threats of torture, and were wholly unfounded.

The oldest daughter, Celia, was a dark-eyed young lady with long black curls—a demure miss, with a mind attuned to music and poetry, but with a most unexpected leaning for Beadle's Dime Novels. The perusal of these highly-flavored, frowned-on, but delightful books imparted such a style to her own narratives that when, as the oldest girl, she was left in charge of the family, she seldom experienced any difficulty in keeping them quiet, as the announcement that "Cele's goin' to tell a story" brought them about her, respectful and attentive, and kept them there breathless and deliciously horrified until the end.

Although a peaceful damsel, she would in cases of necessity maintain her authority by the

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sword even if she had to proceed to extremities and box the ears of the entire crowd, one after another.

Cornelia, or Keene, the second daughter, was a tornado in short skirts. She could run, climb, quarrel, make up faces, sew, knit, do tatting, or fight with her brother on the slightest cause. She was as lively as her elder sister was quiet, and although most of the time a state of most comical warfare existed between herself and Plupy, she stuck by him in adversity, and on many occasions when he was hard pressed by enemies from without, and the tide of battle was going against him, threw her fighting weight in the balance, and won glorious victories for the family cause.

She and Cele both had clear voices, remarkably true to pitch, and sang the sad ballads of the day most tunefully at church sociables, Sunday school concerts and similar festivities, Cele accompanying jinglingly or droningly upon piano or organ as the case might be. "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep," "Evangeline," "I Know

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a Bank," "The Gypsy's Warning," and other cheerful madrigals were more than familiar to audiences at these fascinating functions.

Harry, the oldest boy, familiarly known as Plupy, Skinny, or Polelegs, on account of the colt-like angularness of his build, perhaps needs no extended description. Nature had evidently made him out of cast-off and misfit materials. He was of astonishing lankiness, tow-headed, freckled, and homely, bearing not the slightest resemblance to any member of the family. His main object in life, judging by his success, seemed to be getting into scrapes of his own, for which he was thrashed, and taking with raucous protestations, other boys' thrashings which he didn't deserve. His ambition was to be a bandman, and he loved music even better than witnessing fights or riding on hacks, and was gifted with a mellow alto voice. He considered singing with his sisters as beneath the dignity of a soon-to-be cornet player; and when forced by polite invitation or stern parental command to bear a part in duet, trio or fam-

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ily chorus, purposely and with rare skill sang so much out of tune that he was speedily excused from further performance.

Georgie, the next child, two years younger, was a very demure young lady, somewhat addicted to Sunday school and general goodness. She had a sturdy little backbone, however, and no threats, cajoleries or sophistries could turn her from a course that received her moral sanction. She was not as gifted musically as her brothers and sisters, but could commit to memory with astonishing skill anything that she read.

Annie and Frank, four and five years of age, spent most of their time playing together or fighting, in which they were about equally proficient.

This propensity of theirs was utilized by Plupy, who always took occasion, when no restraining influence was nigh, to set them fighting and doubled himself up with sinful pleasure at the comical contortions of the tiny warriors.

Ned, the baby, was a handsome, fat, and rosy

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youngster about eight months of age, just beginning to creep about, and the object of devoted attentions from the entire family.

In fact, all the Shute children were good looking except Plupy, who seemed to be a sort of black sheep in various ways, which, while it at times caused him to feel a bit lonesome, afforded him a sort of pride in his peculiar claims to distinction.

That high jinks were the order of the day in that household was not surprising. It was a wonder that the good mother and aunt kept their sanity from day to day. Scarcely a day passed but what a temporary hospital was set up in Aunt Sarah's or mother's room. Plupy had been gashed all over with jackknives, stone-bruised to satiety, and green-appled almost to extinction.

In times of epidemic the house was a sort of insane hospital. Did one child return from school with the seeds of chicken-pox deeply imbedded in its system, every brother and sister straightway contracted the disease. Did one

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small unfortunate develop measles, the whole seven at once developed sore throats, inflamed eyes, and fretful dispositions, and made life a burden for themselves and their faithful nurses. No child escaped, and the different maladies occasionally claimed an adult Shute as its prey.

Indeed, when mumps came along and took violent possession of the family, the mother had the worst case of all, and the spectacle of seven children and one-grown-up sitting in the sick room with their swollen and distorted faces bearing ludicrous resemblances to huge pumpkins, not one of them daring to laugh for fear of cracking their jaws, was a most amusing sight.

The children were generally well, however, and in the opinion of good Doctor Perry, the family physician, "as healthy as rats." Plupy, whose feet were wet every day from the first fall of snow in December to its disappearance in the ensuing March, had hideous colds and a portentously hollow cough, and added to his peculiarities of appearance by wearing a red



Scarcely a day passed but what a temporary hospital was set up

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flannel rag around his neck, enclosing pork sprinkled with black pepper.

They were indeed an engaging and amusing family.

CHAPTER IV

"The amount of devilment those three boys can crowd into a half holiday beats all."—George Shute (*soliloquizing viva voce*).

THE morning after the fall of Plupy the family were sitting at breakfast. The father had departed to Boston, and the children were ranged about the table, the baby next to its mother, Plupy and Keene carefully separated from each other by the width of the table, to prevent active hostilities which occasionally arose between them.

A slight cloud was visible on the expressive features of that young man, as he was not allowed coffee, and Cele and Keene were permitted twice a week to drink a much-diluted cup of that liquid, and were assuming some airs in consequence. Plupy had also been severely reprimanded by his mother and had incurred the displeasure of the family by taking advan-

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tage of an opportunity when his mother's back was turned, to offer the baby a pickle to suck, which evoked hideous faces and loud howls of disgust from that small martyr, and brought the entire family to his chair to soothe and caress him. As a further punishment poor Plupy was promptly restricted to butter on his fritters instead of a combination of butter, sugar and syrup.

Attention was happily diverted from the incident by the arrival of the kind-hearted blacksmith, who, thinking he had been a little severe the day before, entered the dining-room with a neighborly freedom, and handed a beautiful bunch of chrysanthemums with the words, "Here, Mrs. Shute, thot ye'd like these er old woman's Christian Anthems, they've jest begun to bloom. Didn't hev no luck with the tarnation pinks this year."

Plupy's mother thanked the worthy man and he withdrew and soon the musical tink-tink of his hammer on the anvil broke the summer silence.

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Just then Beany's whistle was heard in the street followed by a mellow "Hoo-ee" and Plupy, hastily wiping his mouth on his napkin and cramming it unfolded in his napkin ring, muttered "Scuse me please" and was making for the door, when his mother called him.

"Harry, have you fed the hens?"

"Yessum, fore breakfast," said Plupy, nodding violently.

"Have you filled the woodbox?"

"No-o-om," said Plupy, dubiously casting a side glance at that cavernous receptacle, "they is some in it."

"Well, before you go off, I want you to fill the woodbox, and then you must go down town for some errands."

"Ma, can't Keene 'n Cele go, they don't have nothin' to do?" queried Plupy with an injured air.

"Yes we do too, Ma," retorted both young ladies' warmly.

"We have to help get breakfast," said Keene.

"N wash dishes," added Cele.

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"'N sweep," said Keene.

"'N take care of the baby, 'n dress Frankie 'n Annie," said Cele.

"'N practise our music lessons," said Keene.

"'N sew 'n do tattin'," said Cele.

"'N do mos' all the errands," summed up Keene, triumphantly.

"Aw," said Plupy derisively.

"That will do, children," said Plupy's mother, "now go right off and get in your wood, Harry."

Thus adjured, Plupy went to the door and sent a loud "Hoo-ee" into space, which promptly brought "Beany," a plump and wide awake youngster, from across the road.

"Hi, Beany," said Plupy, "whatcher goin' to do?"

"Les go down to Jim Ellison's blacksmith shop and plug hosses with sling-shots. Yesterday Jim was tryin' to shoe Ed. Towle's father's Silvertail and me and Fatty Gilman was hid behind Si Smith's fence and jest as soon as Jim would get one of her hoofs up between his legs

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we would let ding at her, and she would rare up and jump and kick, and Jim would go over backwards, holler and swear and lick her. N'bimeby he got Bill Hartnett to put a twist on her nose and then she would jump and they couldn't shoe her and they told Ed.'s father never to bring her there agen," said Beany in great glee.

"No, less not do that," demurred Plupy, "got licked like time for that las' Saturday. Old Si told father about it and he said he would skin me if he ever caught me doin' it agen."

"Harry," called his mother, "I am waiting for that wood."

"Yessum," said Plupy. "Come on Beany 'n help a feller."

"All right, Plupy," said Beany, "betcher I can lug a bigger armful than you."

"Betcher can't," said Plupy.

"Betcher I!"

"Betcher I!"

So each boy rushed to the shed, loaded himself with huge armfuls of pine wood and stag-



Jim would go over backwards

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gered groaningly to the kitchen. Now, in their mutual emulation they had piled it up so high that they could not see where they were going, and Plupy with bulging eyes and contorted countenance turned to the left by mistake and before his mother could warn him deposited his entire load with a crash in the kitchen sink, much to his amazement and confusion.

While the family, aroused from the breakfast by the unusual noise, were doubling with laughter over Plupy's misfortune, a most outrageous rattling, bumping, banging and clashing was heard, followed by protracted howls of anguish from the cellar. Beany had also blindly groped his way with even a larger load than Plupy, had missed the woodbox and had fallen down the cellar stairs, carrying in his headlong course tin pans, pails, mops and dustpans with which the passage was hung and landing in the soft soap vat.

In an instant there was a confusion of tongues, and great juvenile excitement, in the midst of which the two much-tried ladies rushed

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to the rescue and bore the soap-besmeared and luckless youth to the kitchen, where it was found he was not seriously hurt.

The filling of the woodbox was then completed without further accident and the boys presented themselves to Plupy's mother for further orders.

"Now Harry, remember, I want you to go to Mr. Haley's and get me three pounds of steak and three pounds of pork sausages, then to Mr. Conner's and get a half bushel of potatoes and two dozen eggs. Now don't forget, and stop pinching Elbridge."

"All right, Ma, I'll remember," said Plupy, "three pounds of steak and pork sausages at old man Haley's, and half a bushel of potatoes and two dozen eggs at old Tom Conner's," he continued glibly, "we can remember, can't we Beany?"

"You bet," said Beany.

So the two small boys went gaily down town, chasing, pushing, wrestling and tripping each other up.



*Beany took with him tin pans,
pails, mops and dustpans*

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"Mr. Haley, wanter half bushel er pork sausages and three pounds er steak," piped Plupy as they entered the market.

"What do you mean?" said the amazed dealer, wiping his hands on his rough blue frock. "Your mother never sent you for a half bushel of sausages."

"Yes, she did too, didn't she, Beany?" affirmed Plupy.

"Yes she did, honest now," said Beany, "three pounds of steak and a half bushel of pork sausages. Hope to die."

"Well," said the dealer as he fished several festoons of that dainty from an ice box, "don't believe I have got more'n fifteen pounds in the shop, but I'll take those up, and if she wants some more I can get 'em, but I don't see what she can do with so many."

The boys clattered out of the shop and went down Water street, occasionally stopping to look in store windows. When after an interminable time they arrived at Conner's store they had forgotten what they wanted. "What-

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cher 'spose it was, Beany?" said Plupy.

"I've forgot," said Beany, wrinkling up his brow. "It was three pounds of something and a half bushel of something else."

"I know," said Plupy, "we got a half bushel of sausages at old Haley's, and it was two pounds of potatoes and two dozen clothespins," said Plupy delightedly, "I tell you, Beany, I don't forget things very easy."

"Umph," growled the old gentleman, on receiving the order, "some folks give mighty small orders."

"Praps she wanted to see if they was good ones, father said the last potatoes we got here wasn't bigger'n bird shot," exclaimed Plupy pacifically.

"Boy, don't be sassy," said the old gentleman, firing up.

"That's what he said," said Plupy, edging towards the door, "I ain't sassy."

Their errands finished, they debated what to do. Plupy wanted to go fishing for eels down by the raceway, Beany to see if they couldn't get



Half a bushel of sausages

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a ride on a hack. After much argument they compromised matters by going up to Major Blake's stable, where a variety of mishaps befell them.

CHAPTER V

Mike introduces a novel but effective method of discipline.

THE Squamscott House stables were on Court street in Exeter and well in the rear of that flourishing hotel. It was a most interesting and lively place at all times, but not exactly the sort of a place in which one would like to bring up children.

The class of assistants in the stable was somewhat given to liquor and low language, but were in the main hearty, good-natured fellows, who were nobody's enemies but their own. They were perfectly willing to let other people do their work, and particularly civil to Plupy and Beany, who were only too delighted to do any work, except at home, from washing carriages to rubbing down horses and running errands.

Adjoining the stables was the harness shop of

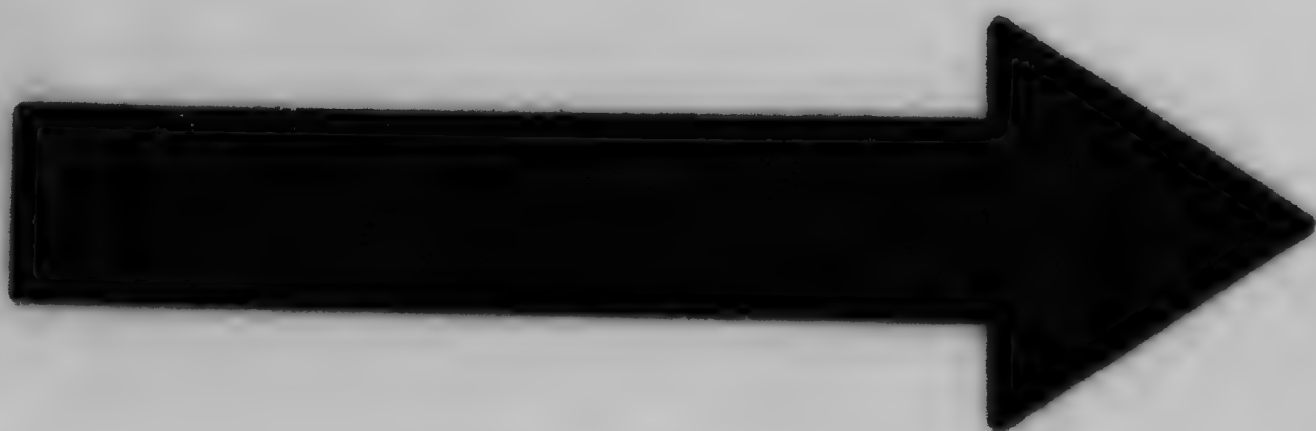
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old Mr. Kellogg, a very worthy and decidedly grumpy old gentleman who passed his waking hours in alternately straddling a wooden horse and drawing waxed threads through harness leather, and chasing disrespectful urchins with a strap.

He glared at the world through horn spectacles and was the most formidable looking old chap imaginable.

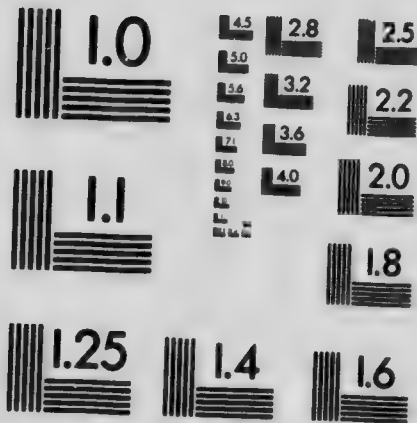
As the boys arrived at the stable a loud and profane altercation was heard inside, followed by a noisy scuffle, as the head hostler, old Mike, came out of the broad door backwards, dragging after him the reluctant and writhing figure of Dinkey Nealey, who was in a condition of intoxication frightful to behold. After old Mike had kicked him into the street he beckoned to the two boys, who approached much refreshed in mind by the not unusual but intensely interesting spectacle.

"Come in, bhoys," said Mike, who had kissed the blarney stone in early life. "Oi've been lukin' for two schmart foine young felleys to do



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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jist a wee bit o' wurrk. Dinky's droonk and the Cate mare 'n pianny box boogy's ordered fur noine o'clock. Jis ta-a-ke hold noo 'en wash the boogy, 'n help a mon."

Willingly the boys complied, and while one squirted water from a small foot pump, the other whirled the jacked-up wheels and plied the sponges. But, as is usual in such cases, the possession of any sort of an engine for throwing water, from a rubber ball with a hole in it to a force pump, induces in the mind of a small boy an unconquerable desire to wet someone down.

So Plupy and Beany had been engaged in their delightful pastime but a few minutes when Beany improved the occasion by turning the hose on Plupy and thoroughly wetting his paper collar and false bosom. Plupy promptly dodged behind a partition and retaliated by taking Beany in the small of the back with a full stable sponge and then from his comparatively safe position he alternately peeped and dodged, jeering at Beany, who let fly at him whenever his head appeared.



Beany turned the hose on Plupy

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Now "Old Mike," seeing Plupy apparently loafing, tiptoed softly along with the stable broom, a most formidable instrument made of birch withes, with the praiseworthy intention of giving him a fraternal welt, as a mild incentive to renewed exertion.

Arrived within reach he sprang from his concealment with a "Whirroo!" of triumph, just as Plupy poked out his hand and Beany sent a stream hissing in his direction. Back dodged Plupy just in time to receive the broom across his back, while the stream of water struck old Mike fairly in his broad and hitherto unwashed face, sending him staggering backwards, coughing and strangling.

"Aaugh-aaugh-ye murdherin' divils, ough-aa-a-ugh," he coughed, doubling himself up, while Beany and Plupy, having rapidly put the roadway between them and their convulsed victim, awaited his recovery in some trepidation.

Mike was not long in recovering his breath, and grasping his broom looked about balefully for the boys, muttering threats. Becoming

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aware of their escape he began to wheedle, "Arrah, now, byes, oi doant ta-a-ke me wather jist that wa-a-y or so much av it. Coom over noo," crooking his huge forefinger at the boys.

"Guess not," said Beany, "ye want to lam us."

"Divil a bit," said the bland Michael. "Come on noo, Auld Moike wo-o-nt hur-rt the loikes of ye."

"Cross your throat," said Plupy.

Mike gave an exaggerated swoop across his windpipe.

"Say, 'Hope to die,' " insisted Beany.

Mike raised his horny hands aloft and called down upon his head the most terrible penalties, at the conclusion of which impressive ceremonies the boys, reassured, approached the restored Milesian, and resumed operation on the buggy with the sponges and chamois, Mike having laid an embargo on the force pump, occasionally breaking into spasms of laughter over Mike's mishap.

"Be gob, byes," said Mike, smiling broadly,

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"f'ye'd squir-r-ted some of th' rale auld sthuff at me, oi wouldn't ha moinded it, but wather from an auld pump, aaugh!" he finished expressively, and he betook himself gruntingly to his work of rubbing down the Cate mare, a shapely, long-bodied bay.

For a while nothing was heard but the soothing grunts of Mike as he rubbed and curried and smoothed the mare, and the subdued giggles of the two boys as they polished the buggy.

"Now, byes," said Mike, having harnessed the mare, "wad ye be a ta-a-kin ahl day for a tin minit jhob? Rhun out th' boogy," and they held up the shafts while Mike backed the mare between them and held her while they fastened the traces and breeching. This done they were allowed to climb into the buggy and were told to drive the mare around to the hotel where the gentleman who had ordered her was waiting.

Some dispute arose as to who should drive, but this was cut short by Mike, who promptly decided in favor of Beany, promising Plupy next chance. "Shure now, Polelegs, let little

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Fat Belly dhrive this wanst, an' yees can dhrive the nixt out."

So Beany, gleefully seizing the reins, clucked to the mare and she obediently trotted out of the stable yard. Drawing up in front of the hotel Plupy got out and made the announcement at the office that the team was ready, and the sporty-looking man, who was waiting, at once retired to the bar-room for another bracer, telling the boys to trot her round the square.

This was a most delightful surprise to the boys and away they went. The Cate mare was a well-broken animal, 'but high spirited and fast, and in a brush down the street could hold her own with any stable crack in the town, not excepting Levi Towle's "Johnny Roach."

Now everything would have gone smoothly had not the boys overtaken Fatty Gilman and Billy Swett, who were driving "Old Chub," Fatty's family horse, which, although old and fat, was quite fast, and as Fatty at once pulled out the whip and began to lambaste his old plug, emphasizing his desire by loud yells of encour-

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agement, our friends could not resist the temptation to go down the stretch with them.

A word was enough for the mare at any time, but a yell such as the boys at once let out, and a cut with the whip was more than sufficient. It wasn't safe to whip the Cate mare. She went into the collar with a jump that nearly jerked the boys' heads off, passed the other horse as if he had been hitched to a post, and disappeared up the street in a cloud of dust.

It was nearly a mile from town before the frightened boys managed to pull the excited mare down sufficiently to turn her into a yard and stop her.

Then they got out and petted and soothed her, fed her with grass and dusted the buggy with their handkerchiefs, and then carefully drove back. When they arrived at the hotel they found the sporty-looking man and his friend very much excited and indignant, and arguing the matter loudly and profanely with old Major Blake, the proprietor, who in turn was berating the innocent Michael for having

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let the boys drive the mare.

A general shout greeted their appearance, and as the drove up Mike seized the horse, and the Major dragged the boys from the buggy and held them firmly by the collar.

"Lemme be," said Plupy indignantly, "I didn't do nothin'."

"Me neither," said Beany with his head drawn about a foot out of plumb by the strong grip of the burly Major.

"You infernal scoundrels," roared the Major, "what did you drive that mare that way for?"

"Well," said Beany, that man told us to drive her around till he got ready, 'n, 'n,"

"'N me'n Beany started her 'n Fatty and Billy Swett came along with a trotter, 'n they yelled and went by us, 'n, 'n," chimed in Plupy, "n,"

"'N first we knowed," said Beany "she started 'n passed them jest flukin' 'n we both pulled 'n pulled 'n we got way up t' old man Giddinses 'fore we could stop her 'n, 'n,"

"'N you sh'd seen us pass Fatty's hoss, gorry,



The Boys fed the Cate more

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we went so fast t' I couldn't see the telegraphic poles mos'," said Beany, smiling expansively and conscious that he touched a responsive chord in the breast of the old Major.

"Oi guess, Major, ye'd better lit the byes goa," said Mike, "shure taint ivery bye that w'd bring her back without sma-a-shin th' boogy, its too good harses ye has, ontoirely. Wun av Char-r-les Toales harses woodent run awaa if ye hit im with a goon."

At th's the Major, much mollified, let go the boys' collars, and withdrew to the porch, where he seated himself ponderously and smoked contemplatively, while Mike, accompanied by the boys, returned to the stable, old Mike taking much credit to himself for the adroit way in which he extricated them from what he termed "a divil av a schrape."

"Shure, byes," he said confidentially, "twas auld Mike that sa-a-ved yer loife this toime. Auld Moike hez a wa-a-y with th' auld Major. He'd a kilt ye shure. An' ye wouldn't be aboove hilpin a mon with jist a bit av work?"

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Both boys assured him of their willingness to do anything in reason, and shortly found themselves with jack and grease-pot, greasing axles, and their own hands and clothes rather indiscriminately, while Mike rubbed down the horses and wheedled the boys, stimulating them to further exertions by jovial and uproarious Hibernian songs, occasionally stopping to apostrophize the horses somewhat profanely, when they cringed and winced under his vigorous hands.

*"Twas in the moonth av Joon,
From me ho-o-me Oi sthar-r-rted."*

"Say, Mike," said Beany, "do you know what old Seth Tanner said about ye?"

"Noi, oi doant, 'n oi doant care a dom fwhat he says," said Mike, stopping his song a moment and then resuming.

*"Ahl th' byes 'n gals wuz nearly broken-hearted,
Kissed me sister dear-r, 'n"*

"He says he can lick ye, Mike," said Plupy

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in a tentative manner.

"Oho," said Mike, suspending operations again, "he sid thot, dud he? Th' auld dronken bhum, auld Mike cud lick tin of the loikes av him, till him thot!"

"N thin oi kissed me mither

Dhrank a pint av bheer, me faleins for to smither."

"Mike, why didn't you go to war? Old Seth did," inquired Beany again.

"Faith," said Mike, "twud be gude riddance t' auld Seth 'f he'd sthaid there."

"But why didn't you go, Mike?" insisted Beany.

"Wull," said Mike with a complaisant smile, "the bist min av th' toon had to sthay t' hoom with th' la-a-dies, an' th' bist lukin' wans too."

"Aw now," said Plupy, disgustedly, "that ain't th' reason."

"Arra now, whot a bye yez be for knowin' fule things. Well, oi alwuz think th' bhut ind

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av agoon th' sa-a-fist ind, av yez kape away from both inds, 'n th' sa-a-fist ind av a sword is th' handle, excipt for the other felly. Bhut th' bist wa-a-y-y' fight is with a wee sthick av black-thorn, or with a mon's two fists, begob."

"Was you a good fighter, Mike?" queried Beany.

"Oi wuz thot," said Mike.

"Could you lick ' Fuzzy Thurston?" said Plupy in turn.

"Oi cud that, aisy," said Mike.

"Why didn't you las Saturday night, when he called you a broad faced Mick?" persisted Plupy, somewhat impolitely.

"He was droonk, 'n a rale Oirishman niver hits a mon whin he is droonk."

"Sposin they is both drunk?" asked Beany.

"Wull," said Mike, with a reminiscent grin, "th' has been toimes whin oi wuz myshtified with th' drink moiself, 'n things wuz a bit loive-ly." He leaned against the door of the barn, filled his pipe with black plug, put on the cover, tipped it upside down, and began to puff loudly.

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A terrific odor of burning tobacco arose, Mike puffed and sniffed ecstatically, and closed his eyes.

"Mike," said Plupy, "whatcher smoking, rope?"

"Nor," said Mike dreamily, "th' bist of auld nagur hid."

Suddenly there came a flash and an explosion; lighting up Mike's face as with a halo, and the bowl of the pipe disappeared as if by enchantment, leaving Mike holding about an inch of the stem in his teeth, and with a look of complete bewilderment on his honest countenance.

"Howly Hivins," he ejaculated at length, "oi thot someone had foired a goon at me."

"Did it hurt ye, Mike?" asked the two boys, who, although entirely innocent of complicity in the trick, were so full of laughter they could scarcely speak.

"Hur-r-t, is ot?" said Moike, eyeing the boys furtively as they approached, "ho-ho it's not hur-r-t that oi am at ahl at ahl. Auld Moike

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niver moinds a jhoke. Oho," he continued pointing at something on the ground near, "luk at th' ould poipe."

"As the boys approached to look, Mike made a sudden spring, his long arms reached out like fish-poles, his huge hands grasped each collar and in a second the astonished boys were making their rapid but unwilling way towards the huge watering trough.

"We didn't do it, Mike, honest now, hope to die, cross our throats," they yelled in terror.

"Ye young divils, oi'll tache ye to play jhokes on an auld mon. First yez squir-r-t me full of wather, 'n thin ye thry to blow me oop with poodher. Oi can't set fire to yez, for yez too grane to burn, bhut oi'll give yez ahl th' wather yez want."

In vain they twisted, writhed and struggled. In vain they protested. In they went all over, and as two dripping, bedraggled and indignant boys legged it for home, they solemnly promised to keep out of low company for the future, a promise they broke the next day.



In they went, all over

CHAPTER VI

Plupy tries to blend a dog fight and a very exclusive social function into one harmonious whole.

THE thorough drenching Plupy had received made it incumbent on that unfortunate youth to go to bed until his clothes dried. To speak more accurately, he did not go to bed, but retired to his room, and attired in garments insufficient for public appearance, but quite appropriate for a hot day, leaned from the window and viewed the outer world with bitterness and repining in his heart.

He was a little more afflicted by his banishment on seeing Beany, whose wardrobe was more extensive than his, restricted to the paternal yard, but not immured in a dungeon. And he had promised to go in swimming with the Chadwick boys that afternoon at the "Ed-dy."

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If Cele would only come up and read "Billy Bowlegs" or "Nat Todd" to him, there would be some fun. But Cele was mad because he had written a letter to Billy Swett and signed Cele's name to it. Father said they sent people to jail sometimes for that. He said it was, he couldn't remember the name, but it sounded like fudging. It couldn't be that because fudging was cheating in playing marbles when you got up nearer than you ought to. Anyway he said it was something pretty tough.

It was just like Cele to be mad at such a little thing as that. Any way she might at least have sent up the book. Girls were mean things anyway. If he had a brother penned up in a room, you bet he would plug something up into his window, a book, or some juju paste or a picture paper or some green apples or something.

As Plupy thus gloomily meditated, he saw a farmer's team coming down the street, followed by a savage-looking bulldog, a strange dog, and his thoughts took a sudden turn into more ex-

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citing channels.

"Gosh," he bet there would be a dog fight when that dog went by old Si Smith's store. His dog always came out at strange dogs. There would be a fight sure and he wouldn't see it. That was just his luck. If it was anyone else there would be a dog fight right in front of his window, but he never had any luck, not he. He bet it would be a good one and he wouldn't see it. Beany could, but Beany always had good luck, but he didn't. Beany's folks weren't as mean as his. They let Beany go out in his yard, where he could see dog fights and lots of things.

All at once there was a sound like pulling a board, fastened with rusty nails, from a dry goods box, again repeated, the opening snarl of a dog fight. Plupy leaned from the window; he could see Beany in great excitement looking down the street. The sounds grew more confused, snarls, short muffled growls, the voices of excited bystanders. Plupy projected a yell of inquiry to Beany.

"It's a buster," said Beany, jumping up and

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down, "they has got right hold of each other's gozzles and won't let go. Now the old man's layin' onto 'em with his whip," said Beany, jumping up and down in his excitement, "now old Si is shaking his fist at him, now Squawboo Bowley is a kicking off the old man's dog. Hi! Hi! Hi!" said Beany in great excitement, "the old man is lacing Squawboo with his whip and Squawboo's—"

Plupy could stand it no longer. He must see it notwithstanding his slightly informal costume. He opened his chamber door and listened. He could hear nothing of his family. They were probably out on the front steps looking at the fight. He bolted for the front chamber and rushed in. Horrors! what did he see? His sister Celia, dressed in her mother's long flounced silk, with lace collar and black half-mitts was gracefully presiding at a tea table, while Keene, sporting an immense water-fall, and garbed in her aunt's best black silk, was handing round tea and cakes to Lady Genevieve McAllister, (Lucy Watson), Countess Hilde-

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garde Buckingham (Jennie Morrison), and Princess Cassenova (Bessie Tilton).

The effect of this skinny apparition, clad only in a night shirt, was marvellous. The ladies recoiled in horror. The Countess Hildegarde gave a loud shriek, Lady Genevieve covered her charming face with her bejewelled hands, Princess Cassenova laid her regal head on the table and covered it with her arms. But the hostesses were of sterner stuff, and after a pause of amazement Keene seized the pitcher and Cele an umbrella and rushed to repel boarders.

They were too late, however, for Plupy, who was standing in a sort of saucer-eyed paralysis at the unexpected vision, let out a yell of abject surprise and mortification and fled to his room, while the outraged hostesses marched straight to their mother's room to lodge a complaint to the effect that "Harry had come right into their party without any clothes on, boo-hoo! boo-hoo! and he done it on purpose, boo-hoo! boo-hoo!"

They were pacified by further and unpre-

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cedented indulgence in seed-cookies and molasses and water (best Hyson) and a promise of a searching investigation of the affair, whereupon they returned to their titled guests. and their mother proceeded to her son's room, where she found the youth cowering under the bed clothes in a state of mortification impossible to describe, which convinced her that his uninvited presence at the party was wholly innocent.

Indeed, his distress was so great that, although by this time his clothes were so thoroughly dried that he was given permission to dress and go out, he declined utterly and reclined gloomily in bed, declaring he would never go out of his room again as long as he lived. Nor did he recover his cheerfulness in the slightest degree until after supper, which was brought to him on a tray by a scornful sister, when he was allowed the rare luxury of reading in bed, and plunged so deep into the fascinating adventures of "Midshipman Easy," that he resolved to go to sea the next day, and not spend the rest of his young life in a chamber, and he



Keene and Cele rushed to repel boarders

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fell asleep devising plans to pack his few treasures in a handkerchief, steal out at midnight, cut a trusty stick and strike for the nearest coast-town to take a ship.

As, however, he slept profoundly until morning, his journey was indefinitely postponed and his cheerfulness restored.

And as he blithely split his kindlings in advance and filled the woodbox to the brim, he joyously planned making up for two days enforced abstinence from voluntary baths by going in swimming at least ten times that day.

CHAPTER VII

Plupy enters politics with the praiseworthy intention of aiding his father to obtain a raise in salary.

THE summer was passing only too rapidly. Early apples were beginning to show red streaks on the side exposed to the sun. The worthy citizens of Exeter, having become, perforce, very adroit in dodging green apples thrown from a withe, now entered into the potato-ball season in excellent training. The bobolinks, whose nests the boys never could find under any circumstances, had brought up their russet colored offspring, had purchased of Old Mother Nature new traveling suits of brown, neat and close fitting, and were filling the brown, dry, close-mowed fields with their plaintive musical call "chink, chink."

The snakes had shed their skins, and the boys had successfully imitated them, having succes-

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sively shed several thicknesses which the hot sun had burned from their blistered backs and shoulders, and now appeared as brown as russet leather and as tough as wire rope.

True, they had narrowly escaped death in horrid shapes from persistently eating half-ripened fruit, and Plupy in particular had caused the good family doctor to resort to drastic measures to remedy a most terrific attack of colic following unlimited indulgence in black cherries.

Beany had been kicked by a stable horse and was unable to do any work at home for several weeks, and still limped painfully when in sight of his house, although his disability was not particularly noticeable when sufficiently removed from that vicinity.

Pewt had been on a visit to relatives in Portsmouth, and the value of residential real estate in the neighborhood in which he lived had appreciated perceptibly in his absence.

But a great joy had dawned in Plupy's life. His father had bought a horse. Not in truth a

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very valuable animal, for she was a bit old and more than a bit sore-footed from contracted hoofs. But Nellie was a very handsome little horse, a dark bay with black points, very easy to ride and when warmed up, a fast trotter.

Plupy was the most popular boy in the neighborhood, not even excepting Ed Towle, whose father had a stable full of horses.

Early in the morning he was at the stable, feeding, rubbing, washing, and polishing his horse and driving father to the station. Every noon he repeated the process and every night he drove again to the station and partook of the delirious excitement of a race down the street with the horses of other gentlemen returning from the train.

Between times he threw an old McLellan saddle and army blanket over her, which nearly concealed her from sight, and rode her. And as he was by no means a stingy youth, his friends stiffened themselves into suffering yard sticks in riding the little animal. If she had not been a Canadian and as tough as a voyageur, she



*Beany had been kicked
by a stable horse*

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would have died the first week. But she grew ambitious with good food, and several times had come home with Plupy despite his utmost exertions.

As I remarked before, Plupy's father was an employee of the Government, and consequently a staunch upholder of the political party then in power. He held himself always in readiness to perform any service in reason that the party demanded, and being a gentleman of much tact and jollity, was a political henchman of considerable power.

He drew a very respectable salary for inconsiderable duties at the Custom House, but was shrewdly working for a raise, as he calculated the increasing expenses of a growing family. So he was always extremely affable and painstaking in entertaining any prominent politician whose influence might be of assistance to him in permanently retaining his place, or in gaining a new and better one.

One Saturday evening he brought home a most distinguished looking gentleman, a politi-

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cian of some note, to stay over Sunday, and having left him in his room, which had been hastily vacated and made guest chamber for the occasion, the family was assembled in the kitchen and the law laid down as to their behavior, and the favorable impression they were to make on the visitor, who was represented as the one man in power who could procure a substantial raise in the salary of Plupy's father.

He had no fears of Plupy's mother and aunt, for they were gentlewomen, but he was naturally a bit uncertain about the behavior of his numerous brood. However, they all promised with much zeal to be on their best behavior, and Plupy in particular made the most profuse promises, which he immediately put in execution by filling the wood-box and water-pail and spending the half hour before tea in cleaning out the stable, appearing at the tea table with his face soaped and scrubbed, his paper collar turned, and bearing with him so terrific a stench of the stable that he was sent from the room to change his clothes, which mortified him ex-

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ceedingly.

On his return he was unfortunate enough to land his plate in his lap, and commit other little slips which made worse the unpleasant impression he must have created.

After supper he harnessed Nellie and held her while his father and the gentleman climbed in to take a little ride around the town and visit a few of the faithful, in view of the coming national campaign. In his agitation over misdoings at the tea table he reversed the correct method, fastened the breeching straps first and then forgot to fasten the traces, leaving them coiled up in front, and when his father, gathering up the reins, nodded jovially to the smiling family gathered in the door yard to see them depart and touched Nellie with the whip, she went out of the shafts like a shot, dragging the astonished and protesting owner over the dasher, and completely tied herself up in the straps, buckles and general wreckage before she was secured.

"Didn't I tell you more 'n a hundred times

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never to hitch the breeching first," roared the enraged father, shaking Plupy violently, "I'm a good mind to skin you alive."

"You ought to have been more careful," said his mother mildly but sorrowfully, as poor Plupy slunk into the house.

It took some time to disentangle the snarl of horse, harness and buggy, but when it was accomplished, they drove off again, and after an hour's drive came home serene and peaceful, and smoking huge cigars, which they held tilted towards their hats, betokening promising political aspirations.

The evening was passed with music, in which the entire repertoire of the young ladies was exhausted, and possibly also the patience of the guest. I have sometimes wondered just what the guests at Plupy's really did think of the musical part of the entertainment that was so freely dispensed there.

The next day was Sunday and the family arose later than usual. Plupy was, however, early astir, and rubbed down the horse, washed



Nellie went out of the shafts like a shot

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the buggy and swept out the barn before his father had arisen. After breakfast, which passed without incident, the family prepared for church. Plupy's father, in view of the limited quarters provided in the family pew, graciously allowed Plupy to remain at home, greatly to that youngster's delight.

There was occasionally some fun in church, for Beany occupied the important post of blow-boy for the organ, and whiled away the time when not occupied in keeping the bellows full, in various ways, one of which was in peeping from behind the organ and making hideous faces at Plupy, to the great scandal of other worshippers to whom he was visible, and to Plupy's unconcealed delight.

But whenever Plupy's father went to church, which didn't happen very often, owing, as that gentleman said, to the exhaustion under which he labored, caused by the mental strain of his prostrating labors in the Custom House, Plupy had to be on his best behavior and did not dare to laugh at anything.

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Indeed, the last time he had attended church with his father, he had narrowly escaped punishment because he could not entirely restrain his laughter, when old Mr. Blake, who sat just in front of them, and who leaned forward to pick up his hymn-book which he had dropped, hit his bald head a most astounding and audible thump on the shelf in front of him, which caused him to pull a most rueful face and hold his head in both hands, while Plupy nearly strangled himself with suppressed glee.

He wandered with deep satisfaction out into the yard. It was a warm day and the crickets and grasshoppers were filing their saws in the grass, the corn was waving in the breeze. In the barn a little speckled hen prated cheerfully, the cooing of his pigeons on the eaves sounded pleasantly in his ears.

The bells had ceased ringing and in the distance the faint swell of the organ arose and the distant cadence of a hymn. After all the world was a pretty good place to live in. Let's see, what would he do to-morrow? First he



Plupy read "Midshipman Easy"

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would go over and see if Potter Gorham would go bull-frogging with him. And if he wouldn't go, he would go down to Fatty Melcher's. Fatty was most as good a fisher as Potter. Only Potter knew more about fish and birds than any fellow. He wished he had some of Potter's books on birds and things. He guessed he would read the rest of "Midshipman Easy," and having procured that delightful tale, he lay on the grass and was only aroused from oblivion to everything but the fascination of his book, by the arrival of the guest and the family from church.

After dinner Plupy's father was called away, and, again to Plupy's delight, ordered him to harness Nellie and take the guest to Hampton Falls to make a call on a friend.

Plupy blithely did as he was bidden, and deferentially waiting until the gentleman adjusted his gloves, settled his silk hat firmly on his bald head and lighted his cigar, he climbed into the buggy and fared him forth gaily.

The politician, accustomed to travel in a

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rather fast class, began to chaff the boy a little about his horse, and intimated considerable distrust of her ability to trot fast. Naturally, to a boy of Plupy's disposition, this was a direct invitation to let her out a little, which he did. The gentleman took occasion to take out the whip and, to Plupy's great but silent indignation, to strike her with it. It was as much as Plupy could do to turn her into the yard of the house they were to visit without upsetting.

During their stop at this house one of those sudden showers came up that left the roads soaked with water and deep in mud, and when they started for home, the little mare, still smarting over her treatment, struck for home like a bird, sending showers of mud over the wretched and indignant guest and the straining Plupy.

In vain he pulled, he could not stop her. She had an iron mouth and was bound to get home as soon as possible. The politician started to expostulate, but a handful of mud thrown by her forefoot plastered his mouth, breathing ob-

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jurgations. A violent jolt caused him to grab frantically for his hat, which he secured just in time. The whirling wheels cast aloft showers of yellow mud which sought a resting place on his dignified person. They whirled around a corner on two wheels, and he grasped the seat with both hands. Another dash of mud sealed one eye, while a shower of gravel stones rattled against his false teeth and paralyzed his fervid oratory.

They dashed over the bridge, up Clifford street, around the corner, a narrow squeak. Plupy was a skillful driver. Another might not have done it. Into the yard, Plupy putting forth all the strength of his half paralyzed, skinny arms sawing violently. The little mare dashed for the barn door, luckily it was shut. She stopped. The passengers kept right on. Both went over the dasher flying. Plupy went farthest although braced for the shock. The politician found himself astride the animal's rump, both arms embracing her. Nellie did not kick. She was a kind horse, and had reached

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home. The politician dismounted painfully.

He was speechless with indignation. Plupy's mother came out. So did his aunt. So did his brothers and sisters. The latter retired to hide their mirth, taking with them the loudly wondering little ones. The former persuaded the politician to enter the house and offered him warm water, soap and towels. He fumed and said impolite things.

Plupy's mother was a wise woman. So was his aunt. They said nothing. The politician finally consented to retire to his room. He could not have done otherwise. He was a sight. He poked his clothes outside his room. They were taken and scraped, dried and dusted, while Plupy told his story.

At about six o'clock his father returned, and was astonished beyond measure to see his wife breaking the Sabbath for the first time in her life, by bending over the ironing-board smoothing out wrinkles in a long-tailed black broad-cloth coat, while Aunt Sarah with a rabbit's foot was trying to restore the gloss to a dam-



The politician fumed and said impolite things

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aged silk hat.

The worthy gentleman was much cast down when he learned of the excitement attending the John Gilpin-like ride of his son and guest, and he was disposed to use harsh language before hearing the whole story, but as he listened his indignation sought a new channel, and only the entreaties of his wife prevented him from demanding an explanation of his guest. So he swallowed his wrath and when his guest reappeared greeted him with cordiality. But the evening meal was eaten under some constraint, and at its close the guest retired to his room, saying he was greatly fatigued by the unusual attentions he had received.

The next morning, after a tempting breakfast, Plupy's father and the guest rode to the depot in a hack, as it was thought that the appearance of the family conveyance might awaken painful associations in the mind of the great man. Plupy's father exerted himself to be affable and courteous to his guest, but that gentleman appeared to be wrapped in an impenetrable

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cloud of gloom.

As the train pulled in he turned to his host and said with a disagreeable sneer, "Shute, if that infernal boy of yours was mine, I'd drown him."

Now Plupy's father, however strongly he might at times express himself about his son's misdeeds, never allowed anyone else to do the same and would fight at the drop of the hat when any person criticised any member of his family, and he came to the scratch with a promptness quite unexpected by his guest.

"And if he didn't amount to more than you have, you infernal blockhead, I'd hang him before night!" he replied fiercely.

"Do you know who you are talking to?" demanded the great man, purple with rage.

"A cheap bar-room politician," roared the elder Shute, "and for two cents, sir," he shouted snapping his fingers under the great man's nose, who backed precipitately away, "I would smash that old plug of yours over your empty old head!"



*'For two cents' roared the
Elder Shute, "I would smash
that old plug of yours"*

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There was no time to say more, the train was getting under way, and they rushed for different compartments.

That night when Plupy's father returned he delighted his son by the present of a twenty-five cent scrip.

His salary had not been raised, but the family honor had been vindicated.

CHAPTER VIII

How Plupy, Beany, Pewt, Fatty, Tomtit, Whack, Bug, Puzzy, Skinny, Billy, Parsor, Scotty, and others became nigger minstrels.

AND now misfortune, which appeared to have visited our good friend Plupy, rather more frequently than that good gentleman could have wished, wisely considering its welcome worn out, went on its way to make life miserable for some other boys, and Plupy for a time, at least, enjoyed a comparative immunity from sorrow.

This was such an unusual thing for him that he did not quite know just how to account for it. Not to be scolded for forgetting to split the kindlings or fill the wood-box or water-pail; not to be reproved by his scornfully superior sisters for occasionally appearing at the table with grimy hands or face or uncombed hair, or for eating some particularly savory or evasive mor-



Puppy bending under the weight of a pail of water

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sel with his knife, because it did not adapt itself readily to the tines of his fork; not to be made to weed the gravel walk when he wanted to go "in swimming;" to fetch water from the river for the Monday's wash when he had planned a little fishing excursion; to run up to old Mrs. Elliott's for two cents worth of yeast when he had obtained permission to ride on one of Major Blake's hacks; all these unusual exemptions delighted him beyond measure.

He had also added to his cornet fund the twenty-five cents presented him by his father, which made good the recent depletion of that fund caused by his breaking the window in the blacksmith's shop. In short, the world moved prosperously for him, and had it not been that the long vacation was drawing to a close, he would have been almost too happy to contain himself.

True he sometimes wondered how long this blissful state of things would continue, and occasionally was conscious of a vague lack in his well-being, due to his unusual exemption from

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verbal reproach, bodily castigation, or banishment to his room, just as one misses salt or pepper in a dish benefited by a moderate admixture of these articles.

I can only explain this unexampled period of Plupy's life by the supposition that it was owing in a great measure to a period of good behavior on the part of that young man, a period which occasionally comes in the life of every bad, or moderately sinful youth, and which seems to paint in blacker colors the ordinary course of life of that individual.

Whatever may have been the cause, it is a fact that once, and from a very intimate acquaintance with Plupy I can say once only, in his life he went a full week without some sort of punishment being meted out to him for misdemeanors of which he was guilty.

However, this state of things could not last very long, as being good was somewhat foreign to his nature. Then again, Pewt had returned from his visit to Portsmouth, Beany had entirely recovered from his accident, and Fatty Gil-

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man was enlisting the services of his friends in preparation for a grand Nigger Minstrel Show in his barn, modelled after Morris Brothers' Minstrels and Washburn's Grand Sensation, the two most popular travelling pageants of those days.

Of course, every boy, who had opportunity to take part in any sort of a show in another boy's barn, would be willing to risk life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to attain the position of End Man, Interlocutor, Premiere Danseuse or Trapeze Artist. Even the less important positions of member of the chorus, door-tender and taker-of-tickets were prizes that excited the warmest competition. Anything to be a part of the show. Plupy was at once reduced to his usual condition of plain everyday boy, and his goodness fell from him as mist fades in sunshine. He hurried through his tasks in the morning, at noon, and at night, at least before his father returned from Boston. He was a prudent youth and generally made amends for his neglect during the day, by filling the wood-

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box to overflowing just before the hack drew up to the door, and so arranged his affairs that when his father called for him he appeared cheerfully, with one arm extended to balance his attenuated frame bending under the weight of a pail of water, with which he plentifully beslopped his trousers and shoes.

I hope the reader will forgive our friend for these hypocrisies. We are all too apt to do such in our mature years, to criticise him too severely. Remember what an absorbing pastime preparation for a nigger minstrel show is for a boy of thirteen, especially when the varied attractions include a "Grand Street Parade with Monster Brass Band, and the Entire Strength of the Company."

We may be very sure that his mother and aunt saw only too clearly through the young scamp's pretentions, and in their abundant good nature and affection for him, rather sympathized with him, and kept many things from the ears of his father, that could have been told that gentleman with perfect propriety.



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The first meeting for the arrangement of the details was held behind Fatty Gilman's barn, the interesting nature of the proceeding being intensified by a half bushel of "Early Astrachan" apples furnished by the Chadwick boys. Fatty presided with great dignity astride a wooden bench-horse which broke under his weight and let him down with a violent thump on the back of his head, and temporarily delayed proceedings.

When he recovered he proceeded to harangue the assemblage with great vigor and conciseness somewhat as follows "Fellers, me 'n Tomtit 'n Parson has been thinking of gettin' up a nigger show, a real bully one, so 't all the fellers which can do ennything better 'n nobody else has got to do it. I'm goin' to be interlocutioner, 'n Billy—"

"Huh, Old Fatty," said Bug Chadwick, disgustedly, "course you got the best part, cause it's your barn."

"Well, what 'f I have?" demanded the fat youth with asperity, "you ain't big enough to be

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in the center, an' I've got you down for a prize fight," he added convincingly, whereat Bug smiled forgivingly.

"Gosh, goin' to have a prize fight?" demanded Puzzy, delightedly, "I'm the feller to fight Bug," leering in a way that promised warm times for his brother, who rose and sparred in pantomime in an immensely scientific way.

"N Billy Swett 'n Skinny Bruce is end men, cause Billy has got a tamberine and Skinny has got the best bone clappers in town. And he can play 'm too," he added with emphasis. "Whack's going to sing a song, 'Shoo Fly Don't Bodder Me!'"

"Aw, Whack can't sing any more 'n a cat, all he does is jest yawp," jeered Puz and Bug, whereupon the dignified Whack became indignant and intimated an ability and willingness to knock somebody's nose off, and further specified the exact time in which the same could be done, which he calculated to be "in about two minutes."

"Oh, shet up fellers, we'll never get doin'

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anything if we keep a jawin'. Whack's goin' t' sing, 'n that's all there is 'bout it, else they won't be no show."

"I'll be on the flying trapeze," said Pewt.

"I can skin the cat on the horizontal bar," shrieked Beany.

"Huh, that ain't nothin', I can do the muscle grind," said Skinny Bruce, "and I can walk on my hands."

"I can stand on my head the longest and eat juju pastes," bellowed Beany, not to be outdone by his compatriots.

"Tel yer what," chirped in Plupy, the musical, struck with a bright idea, "less have a regular street parade. I'll play cornet in the band. I got a tin tunnel."

"Me too," said Pewt.

"I got a drum," said Tomtit.

"Fatty Walker will let me have his bass drum, p'raps," said Fatty, "he is striping some carriages for mother, I'll get her to ask him."

"Bully," said all in chorus.

"What we goin' to sing for choruses?" in-

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quired Plupy.

"'Rally Round the Flag;' 'n 'Hurrah for Old New England,' 'n tunes like them," said Fatty.

"Who's got some black cork?" inquired Whack.

"Charcoal is jest as good and you don't have to burn it. We got lots of charcoal in the cellar," said Fatty.

"I druther have black cork," demurred Billy Swett, "you can get a more niggery black."

"They ain't nothin' much blacker 'n charcoal, if you put on enough."

"Which gets off the easiest?" queried Parson, who was rather more particular about his personal appearance.

"Neither," said Pewt. "You can scrub most of it off your cheeks and forehead, but you can't get it out of your ears till most winter. Most all comes off your neck in two weeks if you use enough soft soap."

So it was voted to use charcoal instead of burnt cork, and the details of a most astonishing

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show were outlined amid much confusion of tongue and ideas, but in great harmony. It was further voted to invite Scotty Brigham, Tady Finton and Jim Early, as these three youths were towers of strength in case of trouble on the line of march with other town boys not fortunate enough to belong to the organization, and besides Scotty could sing like a sky lark and play a real bugle, and Jim Early could turn a front somersault every time and a back one once in a while without landing on his head.

The greater part of the next day was taken up in preparing the stage, which was set up in one end of the broad aisle between the hay bays and the tie-ups. As many wooden horses as the boys could get were covered with boards taken from a dismantled hen house and were secured by nails to cross pieces, and a good-sized stage was made.

The curtain was an old carpet hung from a clothesline stretched across the uprights, and a sail cloth stretched in front of one of the bays made a most excellent dressing or green room

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for the performers. The erection of the stage was not accomplished without serious mishaps. Plupy jammed off the greater part of a thumb-nail by having a board nailed down while one of his thumbs was on the under side of it; and Beany, while striking a mighty blow with a loose-headed hammer, nearly massacred Fatty, who received the hammer head full in his protuberant stomach, as it shot away from the handle.

But at last it was finished and several days were taken up with rehearsals, both of band and stage performers.

Even at home faithful performers rehearsed until their parents' lives were a burden to them. Whack committed and recommitted the lines of his song to memory and droned horridly at the tune, while Bug and Puzzy fought so desperately and continuously in preparation for their act that their mother was forced to keep them in separate rooms, when at home.

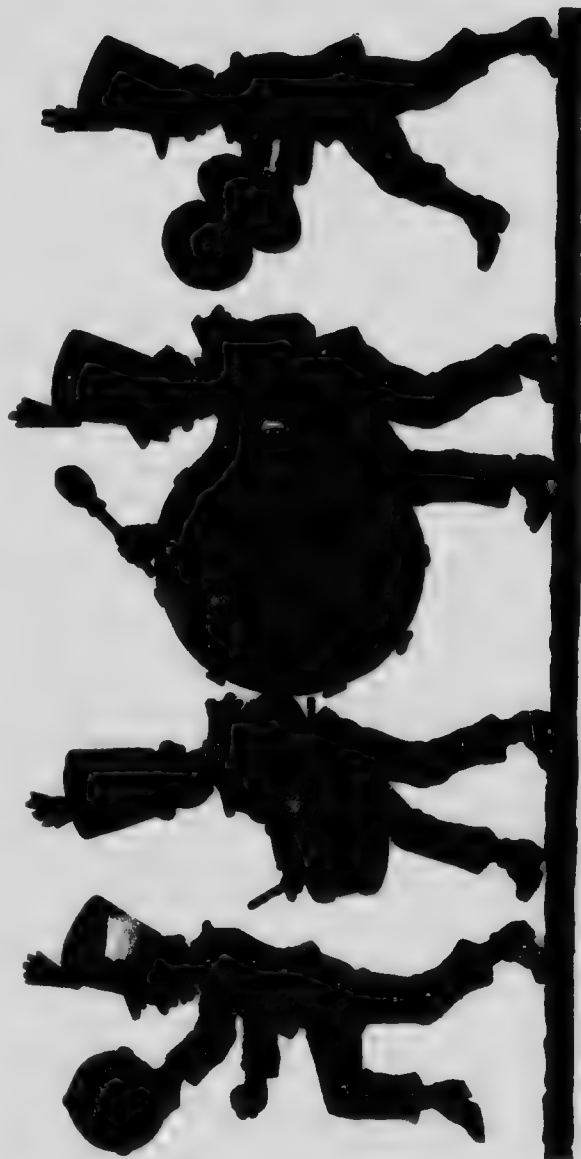
The day of the show arrived and Fatty's yard in front of the barn was filled with a motley

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throng of boys and girls awaiting the performers, who were preparing for the grand parade.



*Fatty leads off, after him comes the band, Plupy,
Parson, Bug and Pewt, Scotty Brigham*



*Billy Swett, Tomtit, Tady Fenton and
Jim Early*

CHAPTER IX

The "Fall of Babylon", due to Fatty's performance and the presence of uninvited guests.

SUDDENLY, the small door was opened and the performers came forth, a set of jet-black, coal-black, raven-black little gamins, gorgeously apparelled. The band wore red stripes on their yellow linen trousers, red worsted epaulettes on their shoulders, gold paper stripes on the breasts of their jackets and enormous paper shakos of red and blue.

The procession is formed. It starts. Fatty leads off fairly blazing with gold paper. After him comes the band, Plupy shrieking awfully through his tin tunnel; Parson, Bug and Pewt shrillingly piping through wooden whistles; Scotty Brigham blowing mellow bugle calls; Billy Swett shaking his tambourine; Tomtit rattling his side drum, while Tady Finton and Jim

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Early vie with one another in administering sounding welts on the bass drum and clanging blows upon two tin pot covers, which did duty as cymbals.

Behind the band comes the rest of the company, marching in open order, bearing canes, clad in stove pipe hats of various styles and shapes, which rest mainly on their ears and shoulders. They are followed by a crowd of boys and girls.

The line of march leads down Front street to the Square, where they are to countermarch and return to their hall. It is at the Square that the sound judgment of the company in inviting Tady, Jim and Scotty was shown as the procession is halted while Scotty administers a sound thrashing to Squawboo Bowley, who with others disputes the right of way, and seeks to break up the procession. The proceedings are further enlivened by a most interesting set-to between Tady and Hiram Mingo, a real colored boy, and the flight of the latter, who is pursued by Tady clear to "Nigger Hill."

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When these little preliminaries have been adjusted, the procession is re-formed and with joyous music returns to the hall, where the public are admitted for the inconsiderable sum of one cent each, and rapidly fill the seats. The currency they offer would, perhaps, not pass the critical eyes of a bank cashier; but anything bearing outward similitude to a cent is accepted by the door-keeper, our friend Plupy, who is certainly not a financier whatever else he may be.

And now, in response to the stamping, clapping and cat-calls of an impatient audience the curtain goes up and displays to the dazzled eyes the circle of performers; Fatty in the middle, dignified and protuberant; Skinny and Billy Swett with arms raised and leaning outwards, the others attentive and ready. Fatty rises; he speaks: "Ladies and gentlemen, overture, 'Little Maggie May'." The instruments shriek and clash and blare, the chorus roar at the top of their voices, Skinny's hands are in such rapid motion that they are black mist. Billy Swett

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rams the tambourine on his head, knee, elbow, hand and foot; the audience shriek with laughter; the overture closes with a crescendo of sound. The applause is terrific.

Again Fatty rises and proclaims, "Song, 'Shoo Fly, Doan Bodder me,' by Brudder Samwell Possum," and Whacker stalks forth and essays to render the little madrigal once so popular. His intonation is hideous, but gratifying to the audience, who manifest their joy by loud yells of applause.

Next Fatty announces, "Clog dance by me," greatly to the surprise of all, both audience and performers, who did not know that Fatty had been secretly practising grotesque steps for a week past.

He comes forward, strikes a posture and then breaks into a grotesque dance; he stamps his feet violently on the stage; kicks, jumps, and whirls around, leaps into the air and comes down like an elephant; the audience is wild with delight; he does it again; there is a crash of rotten boards and Fatty disappears to his armpits,



Fatty disappears to his armpits

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where he sticks, struggles, and bellows for assistance.

The performers rush to his aid; the audience rise en masse, are waved back and the curtain goes down. Behind the curtain there is a sound of shrill and excited orders. "Look out, fellers, the whole thing will go down. Some of you fellers get under the stage and push. Who yer steppin' on? Now then are ye all ready? Yes, now all together," loud grunting sk-r-r-rip, "Hold on fellers, I'm caught on a nail, don't ye know nothin'!—pull out the nail—no that ain't the one—the big one, hurry up, can't yer, we can't hold him all night, now then," more grunting, "all right."

Then was heard Fatty's voice lamenting, "Jest look at them britches, most ripped off me. 'F I go into th' house for another pair mother won't let me come out again."

"Less pin it up, got any pins?" suggested a voice.

"I got some, 'n I, me to," chimed in others. Silence for a moment broken by an agonized

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wail from Fatty.

"Ow, Ow, Ouch! you're jabbing that pin into me most a foot. Whatcher think I am, a pin-cushion?"

Prolonged giggles, "You look like one," answered a voice.

Irate language from Fatty.

Then calls for boards and nails, the sound of rending wood, pounding hammers, and complaining saws, broken occasionally by a smothered yelp of shrill protest as some unfortunate performer pounded or sawed some part of his person, or got in the way of vigorously handled lumber.

Then cries of "all right," silence for the impressive arrival of the orchestra from the flies, and their arrangement before the curtain, a crash of raucous music and the curtain slowly rolled up part way, and then stuck. Shrill orders of "Whatcher doin', Plupy, why doncher pull?" were heard above the din of music, and the curtain went up rather unsteady, disclosing a trapeze and horizontal bar.



*!Skinny Bruce springs for the
trapeze and misses it*

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Enter Skinny Bruce, walking on his hands. He rights himself, springs for the trapeze, misses it; springs again, catches it by the tip of the fingers of one hand, which hold just long enough to cast him off his balance and he falls on his back with a prodigious slam and a cloud of dust. He rises, calls for a box, which is brought by Beany, and he climbs from it to the bar.

Skinny swings his legs violently and finally casts one over the bar. More violent contortions and he straddles it, and pulls himself, aided mainly by his bulging eyes and facial contortions, on the bar, from which he complacently views the audience.

Then he throws himself from the bar and hangs by his bent knees and makes horrid faces at the delighted audience, with his countenance upside down. Then he climbs up himself until he can grasp the bar, when he gyrates violently until he rights himself. Then he drops to the stage, gracefully waves his hand and retires swollen with pride at the plaudits of the au-

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dience, who voice the universal sentiment that "Skinny done well."

Next Beany appears, grinning with delight, and stands on his head and assays to eat some jujube paste while in that position. His first inversion is successful, but as the back of his head is towards the orchestra chairs and the family circle, his mouth is concealed from the audience, who loudly clamor for him to face around so they can see him. This rather handicaps Beany, who has been standing on his head for a full minute and his plump countenance is surcharged with blood until he looks but for the black cork, like a ripe strawberry.

Again he elevates himself and begins to chew violently. His face swells like a balloon, he vainly tries to swallow, chokes, his eyes roll, he gurgles and falls over and lies prone and inert.

The audience remains spell-bound, fearing that Beany has indeed passed peacefully from the world of sorrow. But their fears are unfounded. Gradually, the swelling diminishes,

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his eyes regain their pupils, and he rises and opens his mouth cavernously to show that the choice morsel has departed in the usual direction.

Then indeed the applause becomes terrific, both at his skill as well as his seemingly marvelous escape from death, and he is hailed as the "Human Boa Constrictor" by his admiring friends.

Next a square is roped off with twine and in a trice appear Bug and Puzzy, with jackets off, braces around their waist, and huge boxing gloves on their "Mawleys." Skinny Bruce acts for Bug, Billy Swett for Puzzy, while Fatty the omnipresent acts as referee and time keeper.

Time is called and the warriors spring for each other as if actuated by powerful springs. Their arms swing like windmills, puffy, punky blows fall like pillows in a pillow fight. They clinch and are separated by the referee. Again they go at it like insane jumping jacks. The audience rises to its feet as a man and cheers. "Time" called Fatty, and the first round closes.

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While the boxers are being fanned and rubbed the betting is very brisk, and the next round begins in a very scientific manner, both boxers dodging all over the stage. Finally Puzzy rushes, but is led a dance by Bug, who lands a deft blow on Puzzy's forehead that is acknowledged by those of the audience skilled in the art as a "paister." Puzzy's eyes light up with a warlike gleam. A second later Bug skips forward and meets a wild lunge of Puzzy's that catches him off his balance and sends him spinning into the orchestra, upsetting several musicians and crushing Plupy's tin tunnel flat.

Bug is back in the ring like a cork, tears off his gloves and squares off with his hard little fists. Puzzy divests himself of his pillows and spars for an opening. The crowd arises again in breathless interest, but are plainly disgusted when Fatty promptly stops the bout and disqualifies both men for "Vilating the rules."

"All bets is off," said the referee, and the sporting men look sulky.

Next Jim Early comes forward and turned

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his somersaults with great success, but fails utterly in the back ones, except that he succeeds in striking his head with fearful violence on the stage, which would infallibly have killed or disabled for life any other boy, but which only induces in him a temporary confusion of ideas.

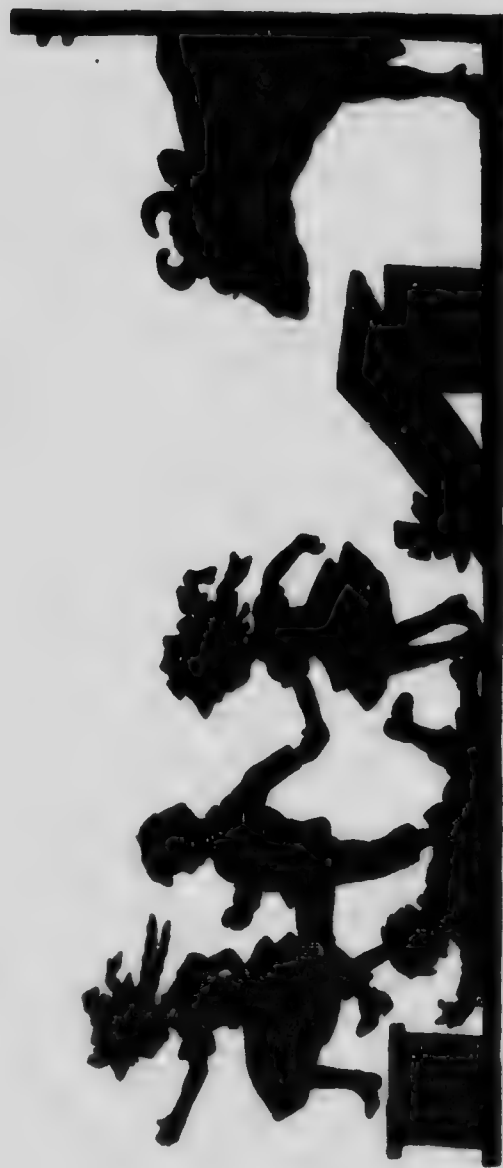
Now the delays inseparable to an amateur performance and the unexpected breakdown of the stage had prolonged the entertainment to the milking hour, and a dozen or more cows, belonging to the fine herd owned by Fatty's mother, at this juncture return to the barn led by old "Speckled Face." Finding the side door of the barn closed they rush round to the big door, which is open. Their calves are awaiting them, also their grain, and for both reasons they are in a hurry. But they stop in amazement as they behold the throng in the barn. Even Speckled Face, the intrepid, pauses in doubt, but the bla-a-t of her hungry calf decides her. The entrance to the tie-up is half way up the barn. She shakes her head and advances threateningly. Others follow, urged by the impatient

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horns of the hindmost and the loud shouts of "Haw! Hi thar! W'heish!" of sturdy Pat Gilroy, who was unaware of what was transpiring in the barn.

At once confusion reigns, the girls shriek and rush for the stage, the bays and other hiding places. One young lady climbs so high on a ladder that she does not dare to come down until she is helped down by the assistance of the entire crowd. The boys also recoil from the avalanche of horns and hoofs. The overweighted stage rocks and reels, a bending crackle becomes a thunderous crash as the stage gives way, percipitating actors, artists, supes, orchestra, band and audience in one dusty tangled heap.

And when the amazed Pat Gilroy pauses open-mouthed on the threshold, the throng are painfully disentangling themselves, while in the tie-up the mild-eyed cows are licking their calves affectionately, while far aloft, whimpering with fright, a pallid young lady clings to the rounds of a ladder.



Even Speckled Face, pauses in doubt

CHAPTER X

The strong arm of the law reaches for Plupy's collar and gets a strangle-hold.

AND now indeed I grieve to say that Plupy began to go to the bad very rapidly. It would be unjust to Pewt to say that it was due to his return from his vacation, because if I recollect rightly, Pewt's mother always contended, and perhaps with much truth, that her son would have been an excellent boy, had it not been for that Shute boy, who led him into devious ways.

Nor would it be fair to Beany to attribute Plupy's moral lapses to his recovery from his lameness, because the fact that Plupy never dared to visit Beany's premises except in the absence of Beany's father, was some evidence that his moral influence was not conducive to Beany's good standing in the community.

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Nor would it be entirely correct to heap all the blame on poor Plupy, for he was not, I assure you, entirely to blame. It would perhaps be better to say it was due to the fact that the three lived in the same neighborhood, and spent a good deal of time in each other's society. I am willing to acknowledge that Plupy was more to blame than the rest, for I am his friend and can speak for him. But the others were not without fault.

During the short evenings of summer the boys had but little time to play after dark. Bed-time came soon after the lamps were lighted. But as fall approached, the evenings became longer, the boys began to play after dark, and the opportunity of doing, under the cover of darkness, forbidden things, led them to decided wrong-doing.

It was unquestionably funny when upon the sharp peal of a door bell, an irate and bald-headed man appeared with a lamp and swore violently when he heard the clatter of the boys' feet as they ran off. It was not so funny when

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they were occasionally caught and soundly thrashed, and which served them right. Nor was it at all funny when some poor tired woman, who had been all day on her feet, came to the door and peered about wondering who would have the heart to compel her to take another step.

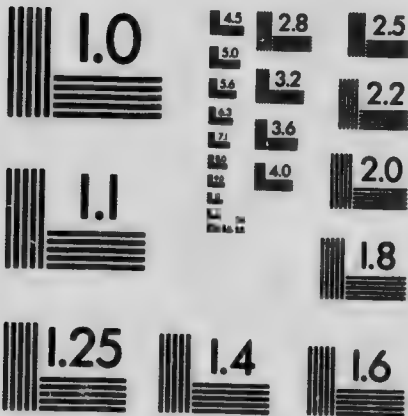
To do the boys justice, they seldom knowingly bothered the women, but generally picked out the most irascible old man in the neighborhood just for the purpose of hearing him curse and "ramp round" as Plupy termed it.

Then they began to "hook apples", as it was then called, and is now I believe. What their object was, I cannot say. They did not want the apples, for they had enough in their own yards. But the excursion, the whispered directions, the darkness and the decided spice of danger had a fascination for them that they did not resist. That it was stealing pure and simple they knew, but like so many others, they considered that the offense consisted mainly in detection, an opinion or excuse that has lured



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many an older man to his ruin.

If boys could only understand the difference between innocent fun and wanton, unnecessary and malicious horse-play, a vast improvement in our young people would be assured, and I certainly believe they would gain more real fun and genuine enjoyment out of life.

The passageway from thoughtless mischief to wanton misdemeanor is short, easy, and downhill all the way, and there is another passageway beyond equally steep and slippery.

*"Facilis decensus Averni,
Sed revocare gradum, hic labor, hoc opus est"*

has been a hackneyed maxim for centuries, but a mighty true one. Forgive me, boys, for making you read latin out of school. You have enough of it there without doubt; but when you come to this passage, commit it to memory and think of it occasionally.

Now Plupy, Beany and Pewt had never heard of this maxim and would not have heeded it if they had, I am afraid, and so they got on

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the downward path and slipped faster than they really had any idea, and from "hooking apples" passed to tying up wagon wheels, and from ringing door bells to breaking windows.

Down on Newmarket road near the salt marshes and mud flats dwelt old Hannah Blossom, a colored woman with a face as round as a football, a body as round as a tub and a voice that could be heard a mile with the wind. What her real name was nobody ever knew. How old she was or how long she had lived in the little one-roomed shanty or where she came from were facts equally unknown. Nor did the good people of Exeter care particularly. She filled a certain niche in the economy of the town as an energetic and competent washerwoman, and that was all they cared about it.

Her face and figure indicated great jollity and good nature, and in her ordinary associations with the townspeople she was the personification of good nature. But she detested boys, and with good reason, for the boys of Exeter had been the plague of her life. She kept geese, and

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the boys chased them in boats whenever opportunity offered, so that they lived the hunted life of wild animals. She kept hens and chickens, which disappeared mysteriously from their roosts, and as in the history of "Griselda Goose."

*"Familiar-looking bones were found
That set her own a quaking."*

But the meanest and most exasperating trick of all was throwing clay-balls at her line of freshly washed clothes. At such times her power of vituperation approached the limits of the sublime. In spite of her size and weight she was very active and on several occasions she had laid in wait for depredators, sprung upon them from ambush, and thrashed them so soundly with her clothes-stick that they never dared pass her premises on the same side of the street again until they grew up. At such times she voiced a strident and high-pitched warning with every blow of her flat bat, which, with the yells of the sufferer, made quite a Wagnerian

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symphony, which was greatly appreciated by the entire neighborhood. A few bars of this symphony may not come amiss.

"Larn yo', yo' po' wite trash, bat, oo-hoo-ouch, to brack a po' cul'd 'ooman's washin',—shake-bat,—wear yo' to' a frazzle,—shake-bat-slam,—ow-ooee-murder-chase ma geese will yo', bat-bat,—lemme be,—I'll never,—bat-slam-shake,—take that yo' imp o' Satan, 'f I cotch yo' roun' heah agin I'll kill ye dead for sho."

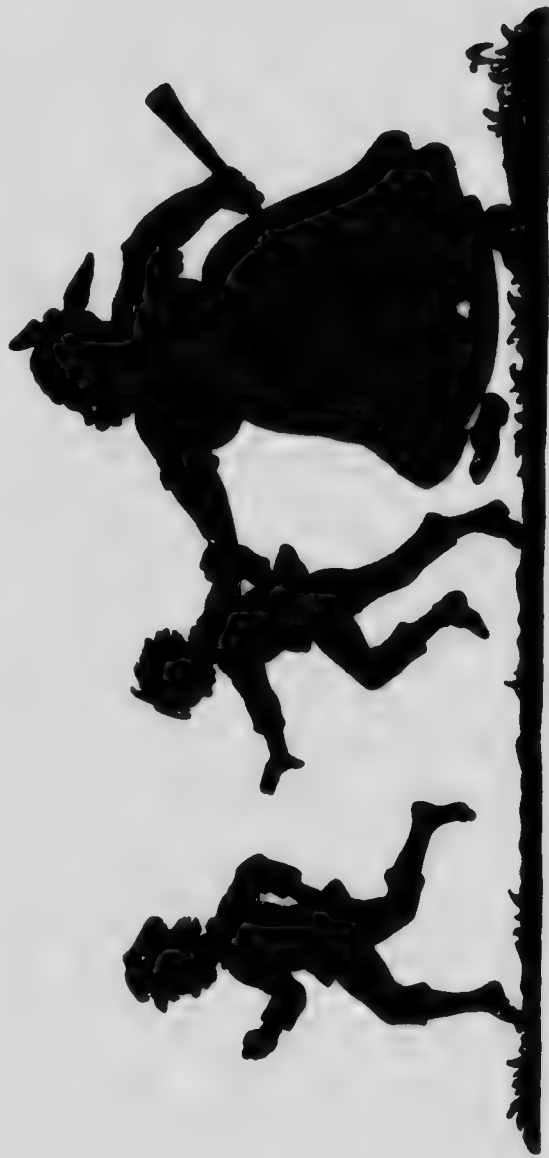
It was safe to say that no boy, who ever went through an interview of this kind with the irate old lady, ever took any chances of again coming in for a dose of her particularly effective discipline, and in this way she wielded a tremendous influence for good in the community, and took upon herself the guidance and catch-as-catch-can discipline of those tough youths who did not get a proper amount of it at home.

She hated boys and no wonder, and at the approach of a street Arab, the whites of her rolling eyes shined like those of a vicious broncho. Her combativeness had also led her into colli-

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sion with the selectmen or the town, for she was a squatter on the town's property and maintained her position by the strength of her good right arm and the vigor and extent of her vocabulary. Moreover she had added greatly to her land-holdings by accretion.

That is she had encouraged people who wished to get rid of their ashes, tin cans, and other rubbish to dump the same on the water side of her lot, and with her own hands had covered the dump with loam and had quite a flourishing garden, which she fenced in with a homemade fence of remarkable pattern. To prevent her from acquiring title by continued possession, one of the selectmen occasionally with force removed part of the fence, put up a notice and fled for his life, pursued by the enraged old lady, who at once repaired her fence, burned the notice and waddled up to Judge Stickney's house to lodge complaint and commence an action for trespass *vi et armis*, which complaint was never entered in court, however, the good natured old attorney knowing only too



Hannah thrashed them soundly



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well the slight claim she had to the premises.

Thus, her entire existence was spent in warfare with the boys and local authorities and in daily struggles with enormous piles of soiled linen, and she lived the life of an honest, spunky, well-meaning and kind-hearted old warrior, who would return kindness for kindness, or evil for evil with equal readiness.

Now Plupy, Beany and Pewt, having in a measure exhausted the excitement of their immediate neighborhood, branched out for pastures new. As they were fishing one day on the flats at the mouth of Kimmin's brook for tomcod, they ran across the old lady's geese, which came swimming down the shallow brook, and seeing the boys, recoiled with sibilant hisses and strident honking screeches.

This was enough for the boys, and, rolling their trousers above their knees, they began the chase. Pewt made a detour and got beyond them and then with yells and shouts drove them shrieking and flapping down stream, where they were headed off by Plupy with much splashing

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with his fish pole. Back they went, passing Beany midway with wings outspread, paddles working and necks outstretched, while a wake of foam and spray was stirred up by their rapid motion.

It was glorious fun, and the boys ran and shouted, fell down and daubed themselves with mud and drenched themselves with water.

All at once a harsh, high-pitched voice split the air with denunciations.

"Yo boys yo, I knows yo, yo Skinny Bruce yo, yo Tady Finton yo, yo Scotty Brigham yo. I's gwine tell the pleesmans for sho. I knows yo, yo imps o' satan."

The boys stopped, grinned, and then, secure in her mistaken identification, continued their sport. They knew the old lady couldn't catch them, and they felt sure that Skinny, Tady and Scotty would easily prove an alibi if complaint was made against them. So up and down the stream went their hissing victims, while old Hannah, from her post of observation on the bank, vainly called down the wrath of

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heaven on the miscreants.

But the boys carried the affair further than they intended, for suddenly, one old fat goose stretched its long neck, half opened its wings, shivered, trembled, gasped, and then the eyes glazed, the head fell forward and it lay quiet. The boys stopped and stared, they had never imagined anything could kill a goose. They looked at each other in dismay. "Gosh," said Plupy, "it's dead, less get out of this."

"I guess not, boys," said a loud voice and, turning in terror, they saw within a few feet of them the huge figure of Charles Lane, a burly blacksmith, who lived on the bank of the river, and who had been gunning on the marshes, as his hip boots and gun indicated. He had been attracted by the shouts of the boys and the cries of old Hannah, and under cover of their absorption had walked to within a few feet of them, and had witnessed the demise of the old goose.

"Now, you boys don't want to think about runnin'," he drawled, "for this gun's loaded

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with birdshot and shot'll travel a little faster 'n you can. So git yer clothes 'n fish poles, 'n that dead goose 'n we'll go over ter ole Hannah's 'n I'll stan' round while she tans the hide off'n yer wi' her clothes stick. Start now," he added sharply.

The crestfallen miscreants obeyed, gathered up their property, waded out and picked up the goose, and started for the shanty, followed by their captor, who carefully and ostentatiously examined the caps of his gun and tried the hammers.

When they arrived there, the rage of old Hannah knew no bounds. It was a case for the police court; it wasn't a case for thrashing. In vain the boys begged that she let them off with a thrashing, she was adamant. And so in a few minutes a procession headed by the waddling old lady, who was followed by three abashed and downcast boys, by the blacksmith with his shot-gun, to which depended the slain goose, was on the way to Justice Bell's office.



Plupy headed them of with his fish pole

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The old lady looked the personification of accusing wrath; the boys the image of guilt; and the blacksmith stern and forbidding, although there was an amused twinkle in his eye, as the populace hailed the procession with delight, and the juvenile portion brought up the rear in large numbers.

They arrived at the office of the justice. That terrifying presence was there enthroned behind a large desk. He looked up, and his deep-set eyes pierced the boys to their very souls. They were guilty, guilty beyond a doubt. Just what technical offence they were guilty of, they did not know. They had occasionally with bated breath and bulging eyes stolen into police court and listened to trials, but that they should ever be there as convicted criminals, they had never dreamed. Visions of brawl and tumult, assault and battery, malicious mischief, cruelty to animals, breaking the peace and other heinous offences swam before them and their heads dropped lower and lower. They were guilty, they looked it, and in front of them with out-

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stretched hand, stood their accuser, the ebony goddess of vengeance. The door closed on the public and is closed to us.

* * * * *

An hour passed. To those outside nothing had been heard but the murmur of voices, now high, now low, now strident and accusing, now pleading and tearful. Then the door opened and the old lady appeared. She was smiling, she had the jaunty air of a conqueror, she swung her shoulders and rolled her eyes. Under her arms she bore her deceased goose. By her side strode the blacksmith.

Within the office three contrite boys sat facing the old Squire. They looked chastened but visibly relieved. They had made promises, they had incurred indebtedness, they had parted with personal property, but they felt indescribable relief. They had escaped jail and disgrace and lifelong humiliation.



That terrifying presence enthroned behind the desk

CHAPTER XI

The Squire points a moral.

THE old Justice paused and then thought a moment. His spectacles were pushed up to the mop of bristly gray hair on his forehead, his lean and veinous hands clasped his bony knees. There was a silence broken only by the measured ticking of the old round-faced Horton clock high on the wall.

At last, as if decided, he leaned forward, replaced his spectacles and peered through them with his gray eyes, doubly piercing through his shaggy gray eyebrows.

"I 'spose that you boys never thought of reely killin' thet goose, did ye?" he queried.

"No sir, I didn't never," Pewt hastened to say.

"Ner me neither," joined in Plupy and Beany, hastily.

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"N ye didn't think that you were plaguing an old lady and destroying her property."

"No sir," they asseverated earnestly.

"N ye wouldn't hev liked it to have three boys plague your mothers or your aunts like that, would ye?"

"No sir, we wouldn't" stoutly affirmed the prisoners.

"Wa'al then, boys," demanded the Squire. "Why did ye do it?"

"Why sir," explained Plupy volubly, confident of the reasonable character of his explanation, "sne was a old nigger woman, an' we didn't s'pose she would care so much, else we wouldn't ha' did it. Would we ha' Pewt, would we ha' Beany?" continued Plupy, seeking confirmation in the cumulative testimony of his comrades.

"Nigger woman!" blazed the Squire in a terrible voice, at which Plupy shrunk into the collar of his mud-splashed shirt, and Pewt and Beany retired behind their eye-balls that suddenly expanded like dinner plates. "Who was

PLUPY, "THE REAL BOY"

Abraham Lincoln?"

No answer from the paralyzed boys.

"Answer me!" said the Squire, with his eyes narrowing like slits.

"He was President sir," stammered Pewt.

"What did he do?"

"He freed the slaves," said Beany, recovering his powers of speech.

"What did he do that for?" insisted the Squire.

"'Cause they had to work like time, 'n wuz licked and slammed round," said Plupy.

"Wasn't that jest what you boys wuz doing to old Hannah?" demanded their inquisitor.

The three boys hung their heads in shame.

"Look here boys," said the Squire in an altered voice, "I don't think you quite understand the matter and I want to tell you a story.

"When I was a boy 'bout yer age, ther' wuz a young colored boy here called Josh Zack. Nobody knew just where he came from. He had been brought here by a fine-looking gentleman who'd put up at the Dodge Tavern down

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pretty near the place where yew boys were chasin' these geese. The mornin' arter the gentleman wuz found dead in his room with a bottle of pizen in one hand and a daguerreotype of a white-haired old lady in the other.

"He had burned his papers and th' wuzn't nary thing on him that would give anyone an idea of who he wuz 'n where he came from. The colored boy wuz near dead with grief and couldn't tell anything about him.

" Well, they put notices in the papers, 'n they wrote letters, 'n they tried everything to find out abaout him, but couldn't hear a word, 'n the upshot of the hull matter wuz that the town had ter bury him. Ther' wuz an alltermutterble howdy-dew about it, 'n a special town meetin' wuz called, 'n old Cy Pettigrew 'n some others said the caounty had ought to bury him, 'n they eenamost fit over it, but Squire Sullivan said 't wuz pretty hot weather 'n they better bury him first 'n fight 'bout the pay arterwards. So they did it, 'n I never knew which paid it, the town er the caounty.



*Josh had been brought here
by a fine-looking gentleman*

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"Wa'al, the next thing wuz, who sh'd take the nig—colored boy. Ole Bill Trefethen wanted him, but Bill was mean he would hev worked him like a nig—a horse, 'n probably half starved him. So old John Emery took him into the tavern.

"Wa'al, boys, he wuz the smartest feller you ever see, and the best to the boys. He blacked boots, 'n run arrents, 'n rubbed down horses, 'n fed pigs, 'n waited on the table, though sometimes the boarders said he wuz a bit strong, him bein' a nig—colored boy 'n doin' the work in the stable, but everybody liked him.

"Why, he wuz the greatest feller in the woods you ever see, 'n seemed to know by instinct jest where the squirrels' nests wuz, 'n jest where to find the birdnests, 'n ez fer fishin' why, he cud ketch a ten paound pickerel where they hadn't been nothin' seen for years but minnies er horn paout.

"He cud swim better 'n any feller I ever see, 'n when a schooner was tied up to the wharf he would dive from the yards. 'N he could

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swim under water further than any tew of the boys together.

"Ye see, 'twas funny, but the shock of his master's death was so great that he couldn't remember anything since he had come to America, but could remember all about the days when he lived in Africa, and he knew all the birds 'n beasts, 'n catamounts, 'n different tribes. 'N whenever a circus 'n caravan came round Josh was jest crazy about leopards 'n lions 'n tigers 'n elephants 'n all manner of rarin' 'n tarin' beasts. Why once he went into a circus 'n jest chattered at the animals 'n it did seem ez if they all understood him, 'n the man-eetin' tiger that nobody dared to go near came down to the bars of its cage 'n jest licked Josh's hand.

"Gosh!" said Beany.

"By time!" chimed in Plupy.

"Gee-whittaker!" gasped Pewt.

"Wa'al boys," continued the Squire, "that air ornery nig—colored boy was the beatenist feller you ever see. He could call a dog away from his master, drive any sort of a runaway or

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kicking horse, 'n milk a caow that would kick as high as a man's head. Boys 'n dogs 'n babies 'n children follered him about jessif they wuz tied to him.

"Wa'al Josh got to be a young man 'n got to goin' with a colored girl named Minty Ann. She lived down near where old Hannah's cottage is but further up the hill.

"We fellers never suspected anything until Josh began to dress up. First he bought a pair of galluses to keep his trousers up. Before that he either used a nail or a piece er string. Then he got him a pair of the afullest green trousers you ever see in this world, a blue coat with brass buttons thet old Squire Sullivan let him have, a fireman's red helmet, a bright red hankercher and the biggest pair of cowhide stogies I ever see, lessee, they wuz number fourteens. That wuz what made him swim so fast, his feet wuz jelluk paddles.

"Then he began to desart us evenins when we wuz playin' "Red Lion," 'n "Run Sheep Run," 'n "How Many Miles to Barbaree," 'n "Tit-

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Tat-two" on peoples winders with a brick, 'n trippin' up people, 'n, Hem! Hem!" coughed the old Squire with some confusion as he caught himself and realized that he had wandered from his moral.

"So we called a council of war and one day when we got him alone we went fer him 'n made him tell. Josh laughed 'n haw-hawed, 'n kee-heed—but finally when we all piled on him and begun to tickle him he gave in. Josh couldn't stan' tickling. He owned up that he wuz a goin' to marry Minty Ann ez soon ez they could earn enough money to hire 'n furnish the little house by the river. That old Elder Twilight wuz a goin' to marry 'em.

"Well, we fellers said it wuz all right slong's Josh invited us to the weddin' 'n Josh said he would, 'n so that night we all piled down ter her house 'n made them both treat.

"You know, boys, thet there's an old saying 'n a true one, 'That fortune knocks once at every man's door.' Also thet 'There's a time in the affairs of men thet taken at its flood

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leads on to victory.' Well, boys, thet's true too, but it dor.' Always lead to victory."

The boys nodded, for those old saws had been hammered into them for years.

"Wa'al," suthin' er thet kind happened to Josh all ter onct."

"You see, one day a fishin' schooner came up the river 'n tied up at the upper wharf. Of course we boys wuz aboard her 'baout ez soon ez she docked. Josh wuz there too 'baout ez soon ez we wuz. Don't know haow many times we wuz driv off the schooner.

"Wa'al, the next day the schooner's cook, a big brute of a man got drunk and it took three plicemen to handcuff him 'n put him in the lock-up. They fit all over Water Street.

"Gosh," said Plupy, "I wish I could ha seen it."

"Thasso," said Beany with unction.

"Me too," said Pewt, violently nudging Beany.

"The next day Cap'n Anderson, thet wuz his name, called Josh into his cabin 'n had a long

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talk with him. When Josh told us, 'baout it we nearly tumbled over in astonishment. It seems thet old Squire Jotham Lawrence the Jestice before whom the cook was tried, had sent him to jail for brawl 'n tewmult, 'sault 'n battery, resistance to lawfully constiteuted authorities which wuz pretty serious offences 'n jest what you boys hez been duin' terday, 'n I might hev done the same to yew 'f I hadn't thought they wuz some good in ye."

"Gosh!" whispered Plupy, shivering.

"By time!" muttered Beany under his breath.

"Gorryation!" hissed Pewt in terror.

"Wa'al, ez I wuz sayin'," resumed the Squire, "Cap'n Anderson hed lost his cook, 'n ez the schooner came from South Carline 'n couldn't stay here but a week, 'n couldn't go back without a cook, the cap'n had to hire one, so he offered Josh a hundred dollars to go with him.

"Wa'al, Josh didn't know what to do. He wanted the hundred dollars because it would hire 'n furnish the little house, but he hated to



*It took three policemen to
handcuff the schooner's cook*

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leave us 'n Minty Ann for so long, as he couldn't get back until Crismas or jest before.

"So that night we fellers, 'n Josh 'n Minty Ann hed a counsel of war in the old Ladd Cemetery. We talked, 'n talked, 'n argied it over in every way. We wuz sorry to lose Josh for so long, but we told him we would look out for Minty Ann while he wuz away, 'n help her fix up the house, 'n ez Josh promised to bring us each a parrot 'n a monkey we thought it wuz a good thing all around.

"The next day wuz set aside fer a good time and all the boys 'n most all the dogs 'n Josh spent the entire day in the woods, fields 'n swimmin' places. Josh told us again the stories of his early life in Africa, sang the songs, 'n danced the dances of the native Africans, 'n some of them wuz turrible funny ones too, 'n at night we all went up to Minty Anns 'n had the best supper I ever et in my life.

"Josh sailed the next day. We a'll went down to the wharf to see him off, 'n one of the fellers made a speech 'n we give him a yellow belt with

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a big horse pistol. We all hugged him, and it seemed ez if he and Minty Ann couldn't let go of each other. They both cried like two big babies and I guess all of us did tew, I know I did. Then we all escorted Minty Ann home, and she cried all the way.

"Wa'al the next six months passed away quickly enough, for we boys always had enough to do, 'n ez fer Minty Ann she worked every minute for that house. We all helped, and whenever she bought a new piece of furniture or had one given her we all looked it over and made suggestions as to where it should be put or hung.

"As Crismas approached we wuz as oneesy ez fleas. We could hardly wait to see Josh 'n ez fer Minty Ann I don't believe she slep a wink the night before. The day before Crismas we watched the railroad station, the coaching stations 'n every road that led out of Exeter, but no Josh. The week passed, 'n no tidins from him. It was turrible to see the grief of Minty Ann.

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"Regularly every mornin' we ran down to her house 'n explained the hundred things that might hev delayed him, 'n every mornin' we left her happy 'n expectant, 'n every night clean tuckered out with disappointment.

"At last it wuz whispered abaout that Josh had been sold into slavery, and the public became very much stirred up over it. When Minty Ann first heard of it she wuz like a crazy critter 'n went ravin' eraound like a lunatic, 'n then hed a spell of brain fever for weeks.

"In the meantime the people had raised money enough to send a lawyer south to make inquiries. They put advertisements in the papers and offered rewards fer him. But nothin' came of it all, except finding the schooner in Charleston. Anderson hed disappeared, 'n the crew had been paid off 'n hed shipped again. The last seen of Cap'n Anderson wuz when he started for Alabama with a young colored man.

"After six or seven weeks Minty Ann got raound again, a thin, worn, hard-featured woman, so changed from the jolly, plump Minty

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Ann of the old days that we could scarcely recognize her. When she wuz told of the result of the sarch for Josh, she made no comment, and scarcely seemed to understan' it.

"Wa'al, years passed away and the occurrence eanamost passed out of mind. I had grown to a young man and had been away to school. Just after the fall of Sumpter I came home. There was a power of excitement at every station, and when I got out of the car at Exeter I wuz met by Minty Ann, her eyes shin-in' 'n she seemed like a young woman.

"She was powerful excited 'baout the war and had been told thet Josh would be freed 'n come home 'n she wanted to know what I thought 'baout it. 'Twuz the first time I thought of it and I fairly shouted with delight. We ha' got to win, Minty Ann, I said, 'n we're goin' to. You'll see Josh yet."

"From that time Minty Ann became the most bloodthirsty Northerner you ever see in this world. She took a turrible delight in accounts of battles 'n lists of dead 'n wounded. She

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sewed, knit, picked lint 'n wore her fingers to the bone working for the soldiers. She wanted to go to the front ez a nurse, but she couldn't bear to think that Josh might come back 'n not find her waitin'.

"Wa'al, the war was over 'n the regiments begun to come back. Every train thet came through Exeter found her at the station with a basket of cookies 'n jumbles 'n things for the soldiers, 'n haow she could ask questions, but she couldn't find out the leastest thing about Josh.

"Time passed, the vets had all returned, and hope deserted Minty Ann 'n she again grew thin, haggard 'n hopeless. After a while her mind seemed to fail her and she became rheumatic and almost heipless, and when the new caounty farm wuz built she wuz sent thar, 'n wuz soon forgotten boys, as we'll all be some day."

"Gosh," said Plupy, "that was tough on her."

"I'd like to lam time out er old Anderson,"

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said Pewt.

"He had oughter been hung, or et by a bear," declared Beany, with heat.

"A few years ago I wuz a settin' in my house one night in winter. There wuz a turrible drivin' snow storm outside, 'n 't wuz colder 'n Greenland. Suddenly the bell rung 'n I went to the door 'n let in a pliceman. He hed been to the caounty farm thet day with some prisoner. He told me there wuz an old colored woman there who used to live in Exeter, 'n she wuz dyin' 'n wanted to see me. He said jest ez yew did, boys, 'she is an old nigger woman 'n I guess it don't amaount to much,' 'n it hurt me when I heerd ye say it boys."

The boys hung their heads in shame, as the Squire looked at them with stern eyes.

"We're sorry, 'n we wouldn't ha' did it if we'd thought," said Beany apologetically.

"Why boys," continued the Squire after a long pause and a glance that sunk into their guilty souls, "I'd a gone to the farm to see her ef I'd had to go barefut, 'n I went. Hed to

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leave the pung on the road haffway thar, 't wuz so drifty, 'n hed to get on old Whitey's back, eenamost froze to death, but I got thar.

"When I got thawed out enough to get abaout and had seen to Whitey who wuz eenamost used up, the keeper took me into the sick room 'n I got a start, for thar on a bed lay an old white-haired colored woman. 'Twuz Minty Ann, I knew her to onct by her eyes 'n her smile, 'n I tell ye I couldn't speak, ther seemed tu be a lump in my throat ez big ez a yarn ball. So I sot down in a cheer by her side 'n jest held her hand, 'n she jest laid thar 'n smiled.

"Bimeby she began to speak. She called me Marse Jack jelluk she used to.

" 'Oh, Marse Jack, it do seem good to see yo. Ah knowed yo'd come to see ol' Minty Ann, honey. Minty Ann couldn't bar gwine without seein' Marse Jack. Marse Jack,' and here her voice grew tremulous and her face took on the same old pitiful pathetic look, 'my Josh, he never kim back while Minty Ann was sick, hey?'

" 'No, Minty Ann, he was never heard of.

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God alone knows where he is', I answered.

"Minty Ann lay quiet for a few minutes with closed eyes. Finally she said, 'I's felt to-night Marse Jack, lak I'se gwine find my Josh, lak he's gwine lay 'is head on my bres, di' pore bres dat's been empty dese long years, so long time, Marse Jack, so long time. Dat he's gwine come back to Minty and 'splain whar 'es been. I'se dream ob tings dis yer night, ob Josh en de ol' cap'n, ob yo's faddy an' mammy so good to Minty en Josh, ob yo', Marse Jack, en de boys, en my ol' heart mos bruk for wantin' to see you onct befo' I went. I hears you has little boy, Marse Jack, en my ol' heart es glad en hopes de little boy so good as his fadder en his mammy. I'se pray de bressed Lord that yo' heart en yo' bres nebber be empty es pore old Minty's.'

"The pore old thing wuz so weak thet she stopped for a few minutes, 'n nothin' wuz heard but the tickin' of the clock. Finally she begun again.

"'I'se great favor to ax yo' Marse Jack.

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When I done dead kin I be buried in de ol cem-try. Pears lak I'se gwine be nearer Josh dar, en kin I have a white coffin wid spangles on de side en gimcrack handles? En could I have a white stun wid Josh en Minty en gret big writin'?"

"I promised her it should be as she wished, and she smiled contentedly, and feebly pressed my hand.

" 'I'se one ting I'se saved for yo, Marse Jack. Put yo hand en my bres en tak dat little bag. It was Josh gin me dat, en I knows he tink yo bes 'serve it.'

"I silently put it in my pocket, and she dozed for a few moments. Finally she opened her eyes, and with a bright smile said,

" 'I'se try to forgib dat cap'n man, but I no tink I kin quite. Tell yo little boy dat Minty lak to make him cooky. I'se very tired—en hope to see Josh soon.'

"Thet wuz the last she said, for she died right arter thet, 'n I sot 'n held her hand for a long time. The next mornin' I made arrange-

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ments for her funeral in the old cemetery.

"Sometime, boys, when ye gwup thar, jest look at those twin stones thar. 'Twuz the least I could do for the pore old critter. Wa'al," he continued with a smile that thawed out his gnarled and frosty countenance like the sun on a frost, "the boys near mobbed me to let them pay their share, jest insisted on it. They wuz good boys, the hull on 'em."

"Judge," said Pewt, after vigorous nudges by Plupy and Beany, raising his hand as if he were in school, "what did Miss Minty Ann give you?"

"Oh yes," said the Squire, "I clean forgot thet. When I got home I opened the bag and thar, whacher 'spose it wuz? It wuz the picture of the harnsom white-haired old lady thet hed been found in the dead man's hand so many years ago."

There was a long silence, then the Squire nodded dismissal to the boys and they stoie out on tiptoe. As they glanced back the Squire sat gazing into vacancy, busy with memories of the past.

CHAPTER XII

Plupy enters upon a short but meteoric mercantile career and with the aid of his friends introduces pleasing variety into the management of a country store.

THE kindness of the old Squire and their narrow escape from jail did not fail to have an influence for the better on the boys. Plupy had purchased immunity from further complaint of the old lady by the sacrifice of an old Brahma rooster and a yellow hen, both somewhat stricken in years but still in fair condition. Pewt and Beany had agreed to paint the single floor of her modest dwelling, which they were enabled to do without expense, as their fathers were both "Painters, Grainers, Glazers and Paper Hangers," as their concise, yet comprehensive and gaudily painted signs informed the public.

The time of Beany and Pewt could scarcely be taken into consideration, as it was not exact-

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ly a marketable commodity, and so Plupy was at once freed from all further responsibility, while they had still duties to perform.

Plupy's conscience always troubled him after punishment for or conviction of any offence, and this case was no exception. Although he grieved for the loss of his old rooster and his venerable hen, he did not consider he had paid any more than he deserved, and he reflected over the certainty that detection and punishment always followed evil doing, and resolved, as he had a hundred times before, to become a law-abiding citizen, and a credit to the town that gave him birth.

In furtherance of this resolve, he determined to seek a situation for the short remaining time of his vacation. Jack Melvin, who had been working in "old" Tom Conner's grocery store as chore boy, had severely jammed his hand in helping move a barrel of flour and had been obliged to give up a situation that he had adorned for several weeks. Truth to say, his employer had not been particularly sorry to

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part with him, because Jack, although an active, bright and intelligent youth, was too much given to the society of such desperate characters as Skinny Bruce, Jim Earley, Honey Donovan and Hiram Mingo.

Plupy, learning of this opportunity in one of his enforced visits to the store in quest of supplies for the family, at once applied for the position, and the old gentleman, influenced by the liberal patronage of a large and hearty family, at once engaged him at a salary to be dependent upon his efficiency, which was a good thing for both parties, inasmuch as it furnished a powerful incentive for Plupy to make himself absolutely indispensable to his employer, in which case he could charge an enormous salary and speedily become rich and great.

And while Beany and Pewt were undergoing the drudgery of enforced labor, Plupy entered joyfully upon a mercantile life and appeared the next morning at a phenomenally early hour, unlocked the store door and proceeded to take down the shutters. Not calculating accurately

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the weight of these articles, the moment he released one from its bars he was borne quickly to earth and crushed almost flat by its superincumbent weight.

He succeeded in crawling out after prodigious wiggling and removed the other without damage beyond chipping a piece from one corner as it struck the brick sidewalk edgewise.

He then, according to directions, proceeded to sweep out the store and had succeeded in raising a most terrific dust when his employer arrived, and reproved him with great harshness for not sprinkling before sweeping, which sensibly abated his enthusiasm for the life of a merchant, and further obliged him to carefully dust the countless articles in the store. As it was Friday, there was no delivery wagon on duty that day, delivery of goods only being made on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays of each week.

Plupy was then put to work encasing the handle end of salt fish in coarse brown paper, scooping brown sugar from barrels, drawing



*Plupy was borne quickly
to earth*

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kerosene and molasses, plunging his hands in pork barrels full of brine and dragging from its depths oblong pieces of fat pork, spearing salt mackerel from smaller but less fragrant barrels, trying his hand vainly at the skillful task of doing up brown paper parcels, (there were no paper bags in those days), digging potatoes from a dusty bin in the back shop, running errands and exerting himself in a hundred ways.

When he went to dinner he was tired, his hands were sore and his feet ached, but he was exceedingly conscious of the dignity of his position, and ate his dinner with great solemnity, and forgetting to fill the wood-box he rushed for the store, with his coat over his arm and the jaunty swing of the bundle clerk.

Arrived at the emporium, he graciously allowed his employer to go to his dinner and upon his departure immediately sampled figs, the loaf sugar and the raisins, all of which had figured prominently among the incentives which prompted him to take the position. The head clerk, coming in about this time, lighted a cigar,

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sat down in the easy chair ordinarily occupied by his employer, and proceeded to instruct Plupy in his duties, which consisted in doing everything that the head clerk was expected to do.

During the afternoon business was slack. The old gentleman did not return from dinner until about three o'clock, and Plupy in the meantime had swept up the store again, moved a cart load of boxes and parcels and incidentally absorbed a pound or so of dried prunes, which began to swell and cause him some internal discomfort.

He could not eat any supper, and after spending a wretched evening in alternately obeying orders of his employer and the head clerk, and fighting off the pangs of dissolution, he was allowed to go home, where he became violently ill, but was soon relieved by strong doses of warm water and mustard, and fell into the deep and dreamless sleep that follows manly toil.

The next morning he rose unwillingly, yet betimes, and found himself as stiff as a soda

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cracker, but ravenous for his breakfast and enthusiastic for his business. He bolted his breakfast in hot haste and hurried to the store. He was a little late and in endeavoring to hasten the removal of the shutters he was unfortunate enough to break a pane of glass in the front window, which earned for him not only the stern reproaches of his employer, but an entry on the debit side of his account of 75 cents, which depressed him greatly.

However, it was delivery day and he was to drive the team after the head clerk had returned with the orders. So he cheered up and swept out, and went through the various duties imposed on him with great cheerfulness and alacrity. As he worked, his stiffness gradually abated, and he came to forget his misfortune in breaking the glass.

Now one of the most important duties of a retail grocery dealer is to accurately distribute the articles ordered. It is very trying to the good housewife who has ordered a dozen eggs, which she must have at ten o'clock sure to make

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that cake she has promised for the Unitarian sociable, to find their place taken by clothes pins, and it is hardly fair for the woman who has set her heart upon salt pork, to be expected to content herself with the unwelcome arrival of dried apples. Nor does kerosene fill the same place in the economy of the household as molasses or coffee-crushed sugar.

Accordingly, great pains were taken to impress Plupy with the absolute necessity of observing great care in the proper delivery of the goods, and the different bundles were properly labelled before being intrusted to his care, and, with many injunctions sounding in his ears, he drove off in great elation. The horse wore a hitch-rein to which a heavy iron weight was attached and at the first stopping place, at Mrs. Gilman's on Front street, the home of Fatty, Plupy sprang from the team, adjusted the hitch-rein, delivered his bundles, climbed into the wagon and clucked to the horse.

He had, unfortunately for unimpeded progress omitted to loosen the hitch-rein and the



Plupy and the head clerk

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horse, feeling the bearing of the weight, turned so abruptly that he tipped the wagon up until part of the contents, consisting, of course, of a dozen or two of eggs, three parcels of sugar and a dozen plates, fell in the street and were scattered from curb to curb before Plupy could stop the horse. To add to his discomfiture, two sporty gentlemen who were taking advantage of a chance opportunity to have a little horse-race were compelled to pull their foaming charges up on their haunches and with great abruptness, which caused them to let loose a storm of inelegant abuse on that much disturbed youth that nearly drove him to recourse in tears.

He backed his horse, straightened his team, got down on his knees and did the best he could to collect his scattered wares, but with indifferent success. He got most of the sugar back in the paper; but it was sanded in a much greater degree than the most economical imagination of any grocer would allow, and as for the eggs, well—

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*"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again."*

Resolved, however, to make the best of a bad matter, he delivered the rest of his wares without accident and in some trepidation returned to the store to make good the loss and secure a new load.

His employer displayed great indignation over the matter and promptly entered the amount of the loss to Plupy's account and expressed a very decided opinion that Plupy was the "Biggest Idjut" he ever "see or heerd tell on."

Little by little the impression was creeping over Plupy that the position of clerk in a grocery store was not going to be quite as lucrative a situation as he had expected, and when his employer and the head clerk withdrew for dinner he was almost too much depressed to enjoy his figs and raisins, of which, mindful of his experience of the evening before, he ate sparingly but with great enjoyment.

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He was further cheered by the arrival of Beany and Pewt, who had finished their engagement at Miss Blossom's and were in search of adventures, including figs, raisins and brown sugar. Plupy at once and with great liberality shared all he had in his hands and pockets, but refused to get any more from the stock, taking high moral ground.

The boys took exception to this and argued their views strongly, but Plupy wouldn't budge from his position. However, he had no objection to showing goods, which, as this was a country store, consisted of a large variety, from New England rum to cowhide boots. Among this variety, to their great delight, they found several very curious pop-guns. They were pistol shaped, and in place of the hammer there was an arm five inches long, that was attached to a strong string, and had at its end a brass cup which held the projectile, a small stone, bean or shot. The arm when pulled back and fastened, was loosed by the trigger and operated somewhat as a sling shot.

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The boys were delighted with this weapon and at once secured small stones from the street and began to practise in turn. Several dogs, who were peacefully plodding along, had their pace greatly accelerated by these missiles, and the old store cat, quietly sleeping in the sun, jumped at least ten feet at the first shot and disappeared across the street with wild leaps and expanded eyeballs.

The boys nearly died with laughter at every shot, and finally when Pewt electrified an old farm horse into coltlike activity while its astonished owner frantically pulled on the "webbins" and "whoaed" and "hawed" with astonishment and indignation, they fairly doubled up with merriment, and loaded up for the next victim.

It was Beany's next turn, and he cocked his weapon and waited. Soon Plupy, who tiptoed to the door to watch, announced that old man Gilmore was coming along with an old plug, whereat Beany made ready and they all waited breathlessly. The old plug came in sight and



*To their great delight they found several
very curious pop-guns*

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Beany, raising the pop-gun to the required elevation, pulled the trigger just in time to catch Plupy's employer, who briskly stepped in view, cheerful and refreshed by a good dinner, a stinging blow on the end of his capacious and prominent nose.

The Conners were all men of substance, men of ability and men of worth, and like many prominent families of those days, bore in their face some distinguishing features. In the Conner family it was the nose, which in the men was large, fleshy and prominent, and capable of astounding bugle tones when judiciously assisted by a red bandanna handkerchief.

Mr. Thomas Conner was an excellent man, a man of courtesy, a man of even temper, a man of charity, and a God-fearing, Christian gentleman. A venerable man of comfortable habits, he was not given to feats of agility, but the impact of the stone on his nose seemed to change his nature to that of a ravening wolf, and he entered the store with a spring like a panther and a shout like a wild Irishman at a Hibernian

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picnic.

Pewt dove out of the side window like a frog, and fled down across the wharf; Beany dodged under the old gentleman's extended arm like a boy playing "coram" and went through the front door like a shot, his fat legs in such rapid motion that they were almost invisible, his head thrown back, his elbows at his side, and every nerve strained to accelerate his speed.

Plupy rushed behind the counter, closely followed by the veteran; he swarmed over it, the old man vaulted it like a boy between the front door and his victim; Plupy fled frantically for the back room hoping for an exit in that direction; his enemy was at his heels; he seized an empty barrel in passing and whirled it in the path of his pursuer; the old man fell over the barrel with a prodigious crash, but was up in a second with redoubled wrath. Out into the front shop again, Plupy just out of reach, round the store again behind the counter, Plupy's collar just an inch away from the outstretched and fateful hand of his pursuer. Again they fled



*Mr. Conner entered the store with
the spring of a panther*

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through the back room, and Plupy by terrific sprinting gained a bit. Alas, in trying to turn he slipped on the molasses covered floor, fell and the old gentleman, unable to stop, fell over his prostrate body, recovered himself and rose with Plupy in a vice-like grip, and rushed him, feet scarcely touching the ground, to the office, where his stout, gold-headed cane awaited him.

Poor Plupy, in spite of his protestations, his cries, his writhings and twistings, was caned soundly, and discharged without a recommendation as a "most worthless, good-for-nothing rascal." Poor Plupy, who had but a day before made such good resolutions and who had anticipated so much pleasure and profit from a business life. To go home to his family smeared with molasses, shorn of his business reputation, and criss-crossed with welts like a plaid dress! Poor, poor Plupy!

CHAPTER XIII

The Elder Shute rescues a chicken and rebuilds a barn.

FROM the preceding sidelights on the character of our friend, Plupy, one may have gained the impression that he was not only a mischievous boy but far worse, a cruel lad. Any such impression was an injustice to him. Far from being cruel he was extremely kind-hearted and affectionate, as were most of his companions and acquaintances.

When Plupy ... d a hard green apple under the ear of an innocent and inoffensive old gentleman and transformed that dove of peace into a ravening wolf, thirsting for the blood of any small boy on the street, he had no thought of the pain he inflicted, of the mortification of the old gentleman when he dispassionately reviewed his bursts of language, of the danger of apoplexy caused by the rush of blood to his

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head due to his rapid passage over fences and down alleys in futile pursuit of his prey.

No, he only felt a justifiable pride in his marksmanship, and a keen and unalloyed delight in the sinful profanity and wondrous agility of the mark.

Again, when a smooth pebble or a couple of buckshot impelled with terrific force from his slingshot impinged upon a dog or cat peaceably taking the air, the shrill yelp of the canine and the loud yawl of the feline and their frantic leaps for safety, gave him such delight that he rolled on the ground with laughter. And yet, the idea of pain never entered his head, and if the same dog or cat were drowning or caught in a trap he would go to any length to save or relieve them.

The highly colored spatter that a rich, ripe, and juicy tomato would make when propelled with judgment between the shoulders of a friend dressed in his Sunday suit on a week day, was to him not only interesting from an artistic view and delightful from a humorous standpoint, but

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thoroughly justifiable, for, as he expressed it, "No feller hadn't got no business to wear his best clothes on a weekday, and any feller which done it had ought to be plugged."

No, Plupy was not cruel, only a bit perhaps, thoughtless, with a very keen sense of the ridiculous, and possessing an active imagination. On one occasion, being the fortunate possessor of a wing-tipped partridge, he spent all his half-holidays for a month in excursions to the woods in the football season, where he painfully gathered partridge berries and other woodland plunder, scratched himself with briars, mired himself to the eye-brows in bottomless bogs, smeared his clothes and hands with pitch, and impaled himself on hidden stubs, in order to nurse and care for his pet.

He would toss his rooster over the fence into a neighboring hen yard and watch the contest which immediately ensued, with soul-absorbing interest, and, the fight once decided, whether for or against his bird, he would bathe, salve and care for the bruised and bloody gladiators

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with the greatest care and patience.

He was always bringing home diseased dogs which invariably developed fits and had to be killed, or cats that had fleas and drove the entire family to scratching and complaining.

He was fond of frogs, toads, mice, squirrels, birds, worms, beetles, slugs, snakes and all sorts of crawling, creeping, biting, stinging and otherwise unpleasant vermin, to which he was invariably kind and attentive, although his ministrations to their needs usually resulted in their untimely deaths.

He was particularly fond of chickens, and always had several broods every spring and summer, which he watched over like a guardian angel.

Plupy inherited this fondness for animals from his father, who had a mania for purchasing spring-halted and spavined old plugs and treating them with a variety of decoctions of his own inventing, which, when applied, although warranted to remove the cause of lameness or disease, removed nothing but the hair

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and oft-times the hide of the afflicted but patient animals.

He would buy cows that promptly developed garget, horn-ail, or sevenfold indigestion in every one of their stomachs at once, and in time he would succeed in removing them from a sinful world by judicious and kindly-intentioned treatment.

And so one night when Plupy brought him the appalling intelligence that one of his newly hatched chickens had been buried in a corner of the barn beneath the super-incumbent weight of about a ton and a half of hay, the old gentleman was all sympathy, and with him sympathy meant action.

Armed with a couple of forks, Plupy and his father mounted to the barn loft. "Listen father," said Plupy, breathing heavily through the nose from his haste in mounting the stairs.

"Howjer spose I can listen, when you are breathing like a planing mill?" retorted the old gentleman. "Shut up, and praps I can hear something."

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Thus adjured Plupy held his breath. Sure enough, they heard a distant, muffled peep from one corner where the hay was piled the highest.

"There he is," said Plupy's father, and with great vigor began to pitch huge forkfuls of fragrant hay on poor Plupy with stern parental command to stow it away and be lively. Indeed, had not Plupy been in the highest degree lively and energetic he would soon have shared the fate of the imprisoned chicken. Indeed, it was only by taking advantage of the frequent intervals when the old gentleman's wind gave out, that Plupy by hard work managed to keep his head above the surface. As it was he was hard put to keep up, and his tongue hung out like a panting dog, while he inhaled hayseed, dust, and a variety of foreign substances that made him sneeze thunderously and wheeze like a grampus.

For an hour they worked with short intervals of rest and refreshment, without incident. The feeble peeping became nearer and stronger; the mound of hay decreased steadily while that be-

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hind Plupy became mountainous. Finally they removed the last forkful. "There he is, father," shrieked Plupy, "grab him, quick!"

Both Plupy and his father dashed forward and grabbed frantically at the small mite. Their heads came together with a thud. "Ow! ow! ow!" howled Plupy as he went over backwards, striking his head resoundingly on the bare boards.

"What in thunder you trying to do, you numbhead?" roared Plupy's father, holding his nose with both hands and blinking through a flash of fireworks.

Plupy arose warily and ready to dodge the expected cuff, but it came not, for his father stood staring at a small hole in the side wall of the barn with his eyes bulging out like walnuts.

"Well, I swear," he growled, "that infernal little cuss fell down that hole."

Instantly hostilities were suspended and they listened intently. Sure enough, from the depths of the hole came the feeble, frightened peeping of the little prisoner.

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"Whacher goin' t' do now, father?" queried Plupy.

"Let the little idiot rip," snarled Plupy's father. "Whaddier think, I'm goin' to crawl down that hole like a thunderin' garter snake?" he continued, with fine sarcasm.

"I guess not," he continued without waiting for a reply, "I've broke my back and strained both arms pitchin' over more'n fifteen tons of damp hay that weighed three thousand pounds to the ton, and I've breathed in a half bushel of hayseed and cobwebs, and I'm not going to lift a finger if that cussed chicken peeps until doomsday," and Plupy's father, snorting with disgust, tramped heavily down the creaking stairs, followed by the reluctant Plupy, almost in tears.

"Aw, come on now father," he pleaded, "what's the good of leaving the poor little thing in that hole?"

"I tell you I've done all I'm goin' to," said Plupy's father.

"Howdjer like to be in a hole like him?" queried Plupy.

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"'F I didn't know any better than to fall down a hole when somebody was tryin' to save my life I ought to stay there," retorted Plupy's father grumpily.

"But I think it's mean to leave a poor little chicken to die down in a black hole like that. Jest like's not a big rat will get him," said Plupy mournfully, "it's mean as dirt, so now!"

"Not another word, sir," said Plupy's father warningly, "unless you want to get your ears boxed."

Plupy discreetly said no more, but went down by the side of the barn and listened. Pretty soon he shouted, "Say Father, he's right inside here, and if we can pull this board out about an inch or two we can get him."

"Git a crowbar over to Sam Dyers and we will try it. Hurry up now," said Plupy's father, again laying off his coat.

Plupy ran for the crowbar and returned in half a minute. Then Plupy's father inserted the point of the bar in the crack and sprung it back an inch or so, whereupon Plupy, to as-

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sist, promptly put his fingers in the crevice thus made. Just at this point Plupy's father, seeing a better place, removed the crowbar and the board sprung back and cruelly pinched poor Plupy's hands.

"Ow! Ow!! Ow!!! I'm caught, father, you'r pinchin' my fingers off! Ow! Ow!!" he roared.

"You thunderin' fool! whatcher put them in there for?" stormed Plupy's father, rushing back with the bar and prying the boards apart, while Plupy, wailing loudly, pressed his injured fingers between his knees and alternately bent double and straightened out in dire anguish of spirit.

"Come! come!" said Plupy's father impatiently, "you are not killed quite yet, so stop howling."

"Guess you'd howl if you had all your fingers jammed into puddin'," groaned Plupy.

Finally, however, he calmed his troubled spirit and with his father turned again to rescue the imprisoned.

The next move was to put the point of the

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bar under a board and Plupy's father straightened up. The board did not give or spring. Again he heaved like a Titan. No result. Then giving utterance to a gruntingly expressed determination to "start the cu-cu-ssed thing if he bub-bub-broke the bar," he strained and tugged until the cords in his neck stood out and his eyes became bloodshot.

Still no result. Plupy's father was puzzled until he found that he had placed the bar beneath the stone foundation and was trying desperately to lift the entire building single-handed and alone, whereupon he cursed heartily.

Next he carefully placed the bar in the right place and threw his weight on it. Crack! the board came off so quickly that he fell on his hands and knees with his hands under the bar.

Plupy did not laugh. He knew better than that. Plupy's father should not have said such things as he did in Plupy's hearing.

Now Plupy's father was a man of determination, and right there he registered a solemn vow to get that chicken if he tore that barn down,

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and he went about his task promptly and vigorously but with a singular absence of skill and neatness.

Plupy watched his father with bated breath as clapboards, sheathing and studding fell in showers, and the crack and shiver of rending wood filled the air. Finally Plupy's father got the chicken. It ran out into the grass and boards under Plupy's father's feet. They hunted some time for it and finally found it. Plupy's father had accidentally stepped on it. Plupy's father weighed two hundred and fifteen pounds. The chicken was very small, but after it was stepped on it spread out over a considerable space.

The carpenters came next day and the day after and the day after that.

Plupy's father was a kind-hearted man, but nobody in the family said anything to him about it. It would not have been well to do so.

CHAPTER XIV

With the humane intention of promoting the common welfare and smoothing of the asperities of war, the boys get up a "Debatin' Club."

DURING the somewhat checkered boyhood of our friend Plupy, the little town of Exeter, unfortunate as the birthplace of such desperate characters as Plupy, Pewt, Beany, Puzzy, Whack, Bug, Skinny, Fatty and others, was, per contra, fortunate in having maintained for a series of years an excellent course of lectures known as the "Lyceum Course,"

From a literary, educational and social point of view the Lyceum held a position of unquestioned pre-eminence in the opinion of thinking citizens, but in the candid opinion of the boys it fell far short of the intrinsic and manifold excellence of "Comical Brown," "Dolly Bidwell," "Morris Brothers' Minstrels" and Washburn's Grand Sensation."

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However the Lyceum was not without its effect upon the minds of our small friends, as in one way or another, by passing bills, running errands, helping the janitor sweep the Town Hall floor or assisting in exhuming the rickety settees from the cellar, they succeeded in attending the lectures with praiseworthy regularity, and marvelled open-mouthed over the astonishing statements of famous gentlemen, who came, saw, conquered, and retired with established reputation and replenished bank accounts.

Our young friends having exhausted their ingenuity in rehearsing shows of all sorts in Fatty's barn, it is not surprising that the idea of having a course of lectures of their own should occur to the fertile mind of Plupy. It was in fact the most likely thing to have occurred to that thoughtful youth, as he had, or to speak more correctly, thought he had, which for all practical purposes amounted to the same thing, a decided talent for literary composition, and possessed a style both unusual and appalling.

Indeed so far from winning the unstinted ap-

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proval of his good preceptor, in the exercise of his peculiar gift he had successively and successfully achieved distinction in turning out the worse specimens of composition ever seen in that school.

Far from being dismayed at lack of appreciation, Plupy, with smiling optimism, attributed it to want of literary taste on the part of his teacher, and persevered in acquiring a style and polish of a hitherto unknown quality. And when this chance so opportunely arrived he grasped it with enthusiasm, and broached the idea confidently to his friends.

He was grieved to encounter on their part a want of ardor and but little encouragement in his literary aims, a phenomenon which experience has taught me is not uncommon in the literary world of to-day. But by tangible promise of refreshments, enthusiasm of a mild sort was engendered in their benighted minds, and by skilfully dangling this glittering bait before their eyes he finally enlisted Beany, Puzzy, Whack, Bug, Fatty and Billy Swett for the

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course and appointed Wednesday evening of the ensuing week as the date of the first meeting, which gave him ample time to prepare an essay of a severely moral nature, under the title of "Cheeting."

At the hour appointed, the subscribers to the course met in the large kitchen of Plupy's house, and as a preliminary measure held a short business meeting, in which it was voted by a strong majority that Fatty should preside and introduce the lecturer.

This happy result was not exactly a tribute to his superior qualifications for the position, but was due in great measure to his undoubted physical prowess and his truculent intimation of his ability to "lick" any boy in the crowd in the very short period of two minutes.

That his election fell short of entire unanimity was due to the less pacific disposition of Bug who loudly vociferated "No" and intimated carping distrust of Fatty's ability to "lick" anybody.

The vote being declared however and quiet

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restored, Fatty arose to introduce the speaker just in time to receive in his flushed and beaming countenance a spitball of such plastic properties as to adhere with some firmness, with which projectile Bug sought to emphasize his dissatisfaction with the late election.

Serious trouble was averted by the interposition of peacemakers, and after as lucid an introduction as the circumstances allowed, Plupy modestly arose and essayed to moisten his throat with a bumper of sweetened water which was placed on the table in front of him.

Now Beany, who was by disposition guileful, and who sought to enliven the exercises by the introduction of pleasing variety, had substituted a glass of strong vinegar for the milder decoction, and when Plupy introduced this acrid liquid into his swanlike throat, a sudden and startling explosion of coughs, crows and gasps followed, which compelled a hasty retirement to the sink and the application of drastic measures to enable him to regain his breath.

It was some time before the outraged lecturer

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could be persuaded to return to the platform, but finally order was restored and Plupy, holding his manuscript at the proper angle, in a high pitched and most unnatural voice delivered himself of the following literary sunburst:

CHEETING

A moral essay by Plupy depicting the evils of "cheeting" and enlarging on the depravity of one Charles "Talar" and Pewt.

they is 3 kinds of cheeting. meen cheeting, cheeting for fun, and cheeting becaus they is times when it wood be pretty meen not to cheet.

it is rong to cheet enny person. some people witch have cheeted and have got money witch had aught to belong to the people witch have erved it onestly and witch have been cheeted out of it, have lived sinful lives and have gone to jale at last.

"Huh, old Gethro Simpson had ought to go to jail for cheetin' us," interrupted Beany, bitterly, but was silenced by the chairman and the lecturer proceeded.



*Beany had substituted a
glass of strong vinegar for
the sweetened water*

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cheeting is prety bad some times but it is not as bad as stealing. my father says so and i gess he knows. one day i was playing marbles with Pewt and Beany and when it was my tirn to set up an ally i set up a big white one which was esy to hit and Beany he did two (at this point Beany, feeling that the eyes of the world were upon him, looked extremely virtuous) and when Pewt set one up he set up a teeny little chinee and crowded it into the mud so me and Beany coodent hardly see it and he dreened us out of all the marbles we had. i lost 48 marbles and 3 agats and 6 allys and Beany he lost 92 big marbles and then Pewt woodent set us up and went off ratling them in his pockets so as to make us mad, and we was mad two but we wood have been madder if Pewt had stole our marbles. the next time we plaid i got the littlest chinee i cood find to set up and Pewt he kept fudging and then i fudged two and Pewt was mad and kept holering no fudging and all the time he was fudging two and i dreened Pewt and he was mad that time. me and Beany we

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said Pewt cheeted the ferst time and Pewt he said i cheeted the second time. but neether of us wood steal except Perry Moltons apples and that is only hooking. (Great relief and appreciation was manifested at this subtle distinction).

Most all peeple cheet sometime, my father and Charles Talor are all the time cheating each oter in trades and when they find it out they dont get mad a bit. cheating like that aint rong becaus they do it jest for fun.

one day Charles Talor come over to the house with a new pair of boots under his arm and said he wanted to sell them to father becaus they was two tite for him. and father he laffed and said it wasent much sence in Talor's trying to wear number 9 boots on number 12 feet, and Talor he laffed two. then father said how much was the boots and Talor said you cood get boots not a bit better than those at old Stacys for 5 dolars and a half and at Erl and Cutts for 5 dolars and 75 cents but he said he got these so cheep that he would let father have them for

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4 dolars and 50 cents. so father he tride them on and he stamped his foot and said they felt bulky and he told Talor he wold give him 2 dolars and 50 cents and they talked and talked and talked and bimeby Talor he said he would take 3 dolars and 25 cents as long as it was father but he wood be feerfully cheeted. so father paid for them and Talor went of loking prety glum and father he laffed and said he guessed he was about even with Talor for the hen trade when Talor sold him some spring chickens with spirs on them 2 inches long and he showed mother the boots and said they was wirth 6 dolars if they was wirth a cent and he only paid 3 dolars and 25 cents for them and mother she said that i needed a pair of boots two and as long as he saved so much on his boots he had better buy me a pair and father he laffed and said he wood and the next nite we went down to Erl and Cutts and asked for a pair of boots for me, and Mister Erl said he had some good boots whitch he was selling for almost nothing becaus they had been in the store so long. so

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father bought me a pair for 1 dolar and 25 cents and they was jest like the ones mister Talor sold father and then mister Erl asked father if he didnt want a pair for himself and father said he had a new pair and Mister Erl he said he sold Talor a pair jest like fathers for one dolar and twenty-five cents and father tirmed red and said yes Talor saw his new boots and liked them so well that he bought a pair of cheep ones that looked jest like them. then we went out and father said he wood fix Talor for that and he give me five cents not to tell mother and Aunt Sarah for they wood laff at him for a year. (Great applause by the audience, and much commiseration over the perfidious conduct of Talor).

they is lots of other kinds of cheeting. sometimes when we are playing crokay we try not to have to go through the middle wicket but we most always get caught when we cheet and then Cele gets mad and wont play with us til the next time.

I gess most everybody cheets some. some-

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times somebody comes to the house whitch nobody wants to see and Aunt Sarah will say, for mersy sakes Joanna there comes that dreadful woman, but when she comes in they say they are auful glad to see her and make her take of her things and stop to supper and they put on the best china and have gelly and hot bisket. so one day I asked Aunt Sarah if that wasent cheeting and Aunt Sarah she said perhaps it was, but if we didnt do enny wirse cheeting than making peepke feel prety good she gessed it wasent very bad cheeting.

the time Fliperty Flannigan marked all my words rite and i was going to get a prise for the best speler it was cheeting but old Francis licked time out of me becaus i told him i hit Cawcaw ferst and i wasent going to get another licking you bet. (Nods of approbation and shouts of "That's right Plupy, bully for you," upon which Plupy much encouraged, proceeded).

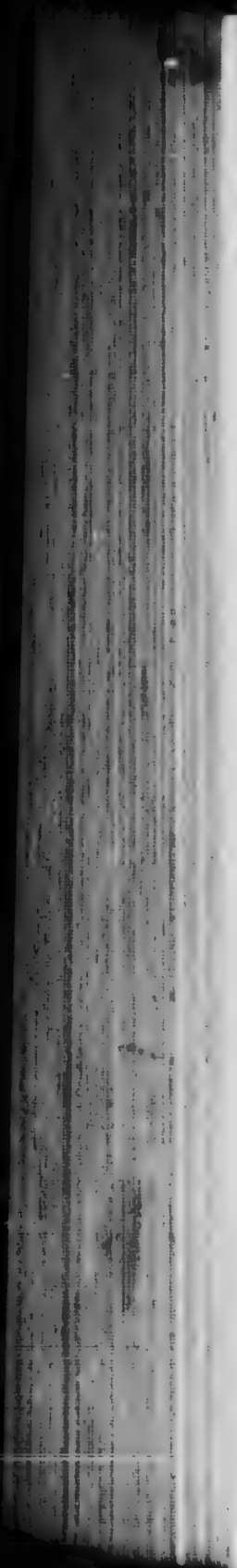
sometimes the fellers cheet in school. if a feller cant resite his lesson all rite and another feller whitch sets next to him knows the ansor

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he is a prety meen feller if he dont tell him (vociferous applause from the audience, on whom this sentiment appears to have made a decided hit). old Francis says it is the wirst thing a feller can do, and ennybody witch will do that will come to a bad end, but i wood rather have old Francis think i was a tuff nut than to have the fellers think i was meen, (Great applause) only i don't like to have him lick time out of me for it. (laughter). the other day in geografy lesson old Francis asked Beany what was the capital of New Jersey and i thaught Beany didnt know becaus he most always misses (here Beany volunteered the information that he guessed he didn't miss any more than Plupy but was appeased when Plupy apologized by saying that Beany was smart enough only he was always raising time) and so i whispered Hartford and New Haven and Beany he holered Hartford and New Haven and old Francis grabed Beany and shook him round lively and sent him to the foot of the class. Beany was aful mad with me becaus he



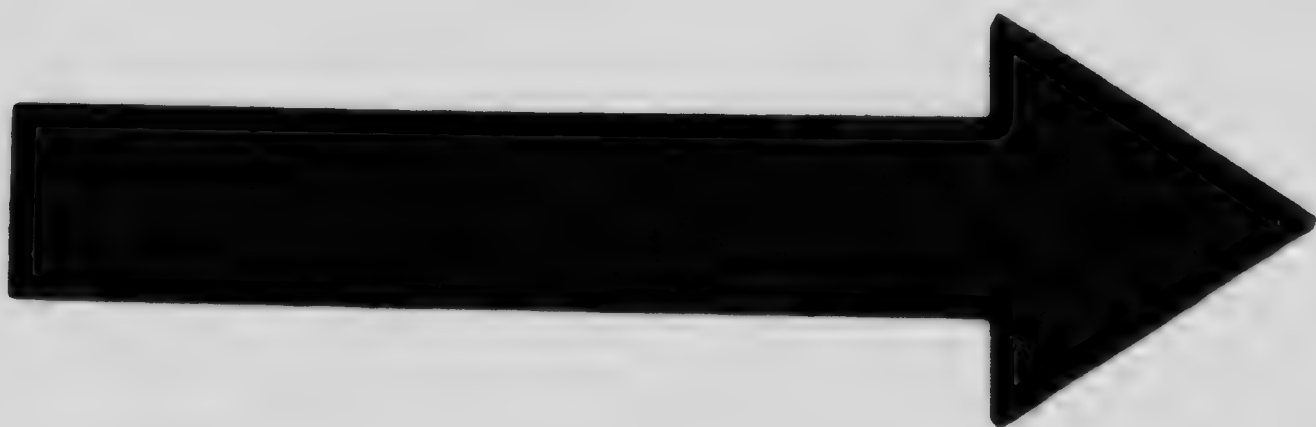
"Old Francis licked time out of me"



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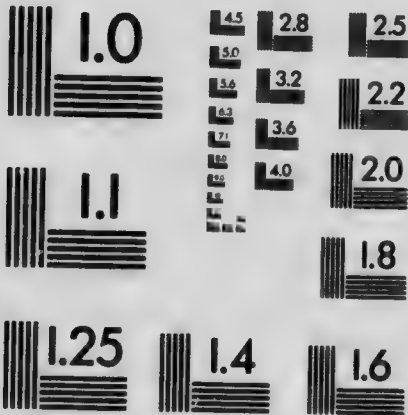
was jest going to answer rite when i told him rong, and he woodent speak to me for 2 days. (vociferous cheers and cat-calls which suddenly stopped when a sharp wrapping was heard on the floor above where the family were peacefully gathered).

They is other kinds of cheeting two. once me and Beany was fiting (deep interest manifested on the part of all, and "which licked?" was the breathless question from Bug) and all of a sudden Beany began to hold on to his stumoch as if he was sufering feerful and when a feller is fiting and holds on to his stumoch, it aint fair to hit enny more than it is to hit him when he is down, and so i stoped and leaned over to see if he was hurt and Beany he stratened up and hit me a feerful paist in the eye and blacked it and so i got licked that time. Beany he thought it was a prety good trick to play on me and i thought so two after i got over my mad and the next time i had a fite with Pewt i pretended i was awful hurt and held on to my stumoch and bent up double and wached my chance to straten



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up like Beany did and black Pewts eye but Pewt didnt give me enny chance and gumped on me when i was all bent double and lammed me. i think that was pretty meen cheating for Pewt. (Great indignation expressed by all).

and so fellers as i said before cheating is rong, and we had aught never to cheet if we can help it and never to cheet meen ennyway."

When the applause had subsided the hospitable Plupy passed round apples, popcorn and sweetened water to which full justice was done and the date of the next lecture was set for the Wednesday following, and as the nine o'clock bell rang from the tower of the old white church, the boys departed after exacting a promise from Plupy to be sure and not forget the refreshments.

CHAPTER XV

A regular Donnybrook fair of a debate.

PRIOR to the next regular meeting of the club, some slight jealousy had arisen in the youthful bosoms of the audience over the undue prominence that Plupy had occupied as sole orator on this never-to-be-forgotten evening.

The ease with which he had delivered his essay or lecture, and the astonishing excellence of the material, had implanted in the breasts of the other boys an ambitious desire to shine even as Plupy had shone.

Accordingly, a special meeting of the club had been called at Whack's house, and that gentleman voiced the unanimous sentiment that "Some of the other fellers had ought to have a little show."

Strange to say, Plupy objected to this and somewhat peevishly inquired: "What's eatin'

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you fellers anyway?"

To this Bug replied scornfully: "You needn't think you are the whole show," and further intimated that it made him "sick to see a feller which wanted to be always yappin'."

As this view of the case seemed to be rather unanimous Plupy was somewhat nonplussed, and again desired information as to what was "eatin' them."

In reply, Fatty informed him that he proposed to deliver a little essay of his own "composure," as did Whack and Bug, Puzzy, Doc, Tomtit and Beany, whereupon Plupy in huge disgust informed them that he "guessed he wasn't a goin' to furnish grub for the whole crowd for so many nights," and further suggested that someone else had "gotter trot out the grub and hall."

This was somewhat of a poser for the rest, for no other boy could boast a basement kitchen so conveniently removed from the rest of the house as to allow them to do about as they wished without seriously annoying their elders.

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So the other boys shifted their ground a bit, and resorted to persuasion and flattery.

"Aw now, Plupy, what's the use of bein' mean about it?" queried Bug.

"That's so, Plupy," chimed in Doc, "we fellers know you can do it better'n us fellers, but that ain't no reason why we hadn't ought to have any chance."

"Aw, come on Plupy," said Fatty, persuasively, "it aint like you to be mean."

"You bet it ain't, Fatty," said Tomtit, nodding his head assertively, "Plupy is the generousst feller out if you don't try to drive him."

"That's so," added Puzzy with fine diplomacy, "Plupy's a bad one to drive, and he has got plenty of spunk, but nobody ever knew Plupy to be mean. Only las' night Fatty said a feller could have more fun at Plupy's than anywhere else."

Now Plupy was so unused to praise that these fulsome compliments quite smoothed down his ruffled plumage and he so far unbent as to say:

"Of course, fellers, I don't want to be mean

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about it, and if you fellers want to get off any blob, why I ain't stoppin' you," whereupon he was at once voted a brick, and a discussion began over a question of precedence.

And here again trouble arose. Fatty claimed precedence as the biggest, the oldest, and the best fighter.

Bug admitted Fatty's right to the first and second qualifications but scoffed vigorously at the third. Whack claimed that he was in the first class in the grammar school, and consequently was entitled to first place, but Puzzy said that Whack was most always at the foot of his class, and he guessed Whack couldn't brag much anyway.

Tomtit, the swiftest runner, moved that the question be settled by a foot-race, which motion was voted down *vivissima voce*.

Fatty advocated an adjudication by wager of battle, a motion rejected by a majority vote, Bug dissenting vigorously.

Bug suggested "plugging rocks at a mark," in which he had really superlative skill, but this

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proposition shared the fate of the others.

Doc proposed putting it to a vote, which was promptly done, but as each boy voted for himself, no satisfactory conclusion was reached.

Finally, as no amicable solution appeared possible, Beany proposed a joint debate in which everyone could take part. As this suggestion appealed to the combative disposition of every boy there, it was hailed with acclaim, and a choice of subjects was proposed to be at once made in writing.

Plupy suggested "whitch can lick Scotty Brigham or Stubby Gooch?"

Whack: "Whitch can kick a football the highest, Chitter Robinson or Kibo Marston?"

Beany: "Which can trot the fastest, Charles Toles' Nelly or Levi Toles' Johnny Roach?"

Fatty: "Which can squert the furtherest the fountain or the torrent?"

Plupy created some surprise by further suggesting: "Whitch settled Exeter ferst, John Whealrite or John Quinzy Ann Pollard?"

Whereupon Whack, not to be outdone in a

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reputation for historical research, proposed: "Whitch was rite, the Ferst or the Secont Congrigationeral Chirch?"

Now, as might have been expected each boy obstinately stood for his own subject and flatly declined to consider any other. And so, after what bid fair to be an interminable and vituperative wrangle between the boys, Doc suggested an entirely different one, which had for years challenged the brightest minds of the rural debating clubs:

"Whitch is the mitier, the pen or the sword?"

After some grumbling, this was assented to, and Fatty, as permanent chairman, selected the following disputants and officers.

For the sword, Doc, Bug, Plupy. For the pen, Whack, Beany, Puzzy. Chairman, Fatty. Referee, Tomtit.

On the evening of the debate it was evident that a battle royal was to be waged.

Each boy bore himself with a sort of chip-on-the-shoulder air, and was apparently loaded to the muzzle with technical information calcu-

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lated to blow the opposition into infinitesimal smithereens. Likewise, the gorgeousness of their neckties, and the brilliancy of their boots astounded the beholder not a little.

At 7 P. M. Fatty ponderously made the following announcement. "Fellers, the subject this evenin' is a debate, which is the mightiest the pen or the sword? Now I have wrote some rules so you fellers won't get fighting and everything will be fair."

"Rule 1. No calling of each other liers.

"Rule 2. No plugging of spit balls aloud.

"Rule 3. No 2 fellers can debait to onct.

"Rule 4. Every feller has got to stop talking when the chairman tells him to, and keep still two.

"Rule 5. I am the chairman.

"The first teller which is in favor of the sword will now speak. Time!"

At the call of time Billy Swett stepped forth bowed, grinned, and began a masterly argument.

"Fellers, the sword is mightier than the pen.

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Why? because it is longer, and bigger round, and has a handle to grab it with. Course it is mightier. I should think any feller would know that. When brave Horatias held the bridge, what did he do it with—a pen? Well, I guess not bad. How long could he have stood against the three fellers that came at him? What did he hit the great lord of Luna with? Did he jab him with a pen? No, you bet he didn't, he pasted him a good one with his sword, and he had to pull three times before he could get it out. He had to put his foot on his gozzle and pull like time.

"Sposen he had jabbed him with a pen, I guess it would have come out easy. And where would he have been?

"Then, again, a sword is made of steel an' until a little while ago pens were made of goose feathers. Did any of you fellers ever see a sword made of a goose feather, or a hen feather, or a turkey feather or any sort of a feather? Ahn, I guess not!"

Vigorous applause from the adherents of the

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sword greeted him, mingled with groans and hisses from the pen sympathizers, and Doc took his seat, moping his brow.

No sooner was quiet restored than Whack rose with dignity, while Bug bobbed up as buoyantly as a cock.

"Fellers," he yelled, "Doc is all right, and if anyone has got anything to say let him step right down here and back it up."

Bang! Bang! Bang from the gavel. "Shet up Bug, 'taint your turn."

"'Tis too," insisted Bug.

"'Taint neither."

"'Tis."

"'Taint."

"'Tis."

"You lie."

"You lie back."

"Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order." said Whack with dignity.

"Yah, old Whack, who said you didn't?" scoffed Bug, "Point of order, Huh."

"I guess I can keep order here without any of

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your help, Whack," roared Fatty, purple with indignation at what he considered a high-handed attempt to usurp his prerogative as chairman. "If you've got anything to say, say it, and then shet up!"

"Fellers," said Whack, calmly ignoring Fatty's rudeness, as Bug subsided, shaking his head defiantly, "Doc don't know what he's talking about. It ain't which is made of the strongest metal, but which you can do the most with. When the pilgrin fathers signed the declaration of independence they made the Fourth of July, and they didn't sign it with a sword, did they? No, you bet they didn't they signed it with a pen. And if it hadn't been for a pen in the hands of them same pilgrin fathers, you wouldn't have any Fourth of July, ner any fire-crackers, ner torpedoes, ner rockets, ner red lights, ner nothin.'

(Terrific applause from the men of the pen, and amazed silence on the other side of the house).

"Then again," resumed Whacker, "when



Fatty roared at Whack, purple with indignation

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Abraham Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation, he freed the nigger slaves, millions of them, and they keep the pen he signed it with in Washington. And where would them niggers been if he had tried to sign it with a sword? Where would they been, I say?"

And Whacker retired triumphantly, conscious of having scored heavily.

But Bug was equal to the emergency, and burst into his argument with explosive force.

"Fellers, Whack says the Pilgrin Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence. Who said they didn't? What if they did? They had to fight for it afterwards, didn't they? Sposen they hadn't done nothing while the revolution was going on but keep signing declarations of independence, while old Cornwallis and Benedict Arnold, and King George and Mark Anthony and those fellers had been whacking their heads off with swords, where would Cotton Mather and Giles Corey and Captain John Smith and George Washington been then, say I."

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(Tremendous applause by Bug's adherents).

"An' it was jest so when Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation. Did that free the niggers? What was General Grant, and Sherman, and Sheridan, and General Marston and Beany's father and Kibo Marston doing then? Was they signing proclamations? Well, I guess not much! They was pasting round lively with their swords. Where would Hiram Mingo, and Gran Miller and old man Cuttler and Nigger Tash been if it wasn't for them? They would be picking cotton or shinnin' up trees to get out of the reach of blood hounds, 'n Whack knows it, if he knows anything."

The applause that greeted this brilliant argument showed only too plainly that the carefully gathered historical data of the scholarly Whack were discredited by even his own adherents.

But he had a worthy champion, for scarcely had Bug concluded, when Beany popped up, rampant.

"Fellers, what Whack said about the pen was right. I don't care what Bug says. You

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know old Seth Tanner. Well, old Seth he had a pig pen down on South street, and it smelt so bad that it stunk everybody out of the neighborhood. Most everybody had to move away, and those that didn't, got typhoid fever and died. Well, one day old Seth got drunk and got an old army sword and started to clean out the town, and old Kimball Thurston, Medo's father, grabbed him and slapped his mouth, and took away his sword and ducked him in the horse trough until he promised to keep quiet. Now what did the sword amount to? Nothin'. What did the pig pen amount to? It killed everyone in the neighborhood and drove out all the rest. Which was the mightiest there? Whatcher got to say about it now?"

Instantly Doc, Bug and Plupy were on their feet protesting, and shouts of—"Mr. Chairman—point of order—we aint—shet up, Plupy has the floor. Aw now, fellers—bang! bang! bang! somebody 'll get punched, 'smy turn, aint talking about pig pens—cheat! cheat! we are too—bang! bang! bang!—shet up, I tell you, Plupy

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got up first, listen to Plupy, bang! bang! bang!

After awhile the chairman restored order, and the justly indignant Plupy shouted, "Taint fair, Beany, we aint debatin' about pig pens, ner calf pens, ner hen pens, but pens you write with, and—

Here Puzzy jumped to his feet and objected, claiming that Plupy ought to address the chairman and not argue with a fellow-member, but was in turn interrupted by Whack, who again arose to a point of order, to Fatty's almost speechless indignation.

"I tell ye I can keep order without—Mr. Chairman, I move—aw now shet up, Whack—and Plupy don't know nothin'—I have the—bang! bang!—liar and you know—put it to vote—order—cheat—cheat—shet up—order!"

Finally Fatty succeeded in putting Plupy's motion and called for the yeas and nays.

"Ain't yer goin' to 'low us to argue on the motion?" shouted Bug. But Fatty ruled with adamantine firmness against further argument, and again called for the yeas and nays, where-

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upon Whack, Beany and Puzzy loudly voted "Aye!" and Doc, Bug and Plupy fairly screeched "No!" upon which a tie vote was declared and Bedlam again broke loose.

"Vote again—doubted—Fatty can't count—leave it to—fraud—who's a liar?—You aint man enough—Yah, Yah,—don't dass to—shet up—won't—seddown—can't make me—bang! bang! bang!

After a few minutes turmoil the chairman secured a temporary lull, and referred the matter to Tomtit as Referee, who, although utterly in the dark as to the strict meaning of the motion, promptly decided against the admission of the pig pen as an element of might, to the great delight of the sword-bearers.

The debaters were called upon to proceed, and Plupy arose and zealously sailed in.

"Fellers, what was old Kempenfelt doin' when the Royal George was tipped over and sunk? Was he a tendin' to business as he had ought to have been? No, he wasn't, and you fellers all know it, because you have all read it

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in the school reader and most of you have spoke it.

*'His sword was in its sheath,
His fingers held the pen
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.'*

"If old Kempenfelt had been 'tendin' to business, and had been up on deck with his sword in his hand ready to lam time out of any sailor which wasn't doin' any duty, he might have been sailin' round now. Instead of that he was down in the cabin foolin' round with a pen, writin' to his girl perhaps, and his old ship went down just because he wasn't lookin' out for things as he ought to have been." And Plupy sat down conscious of having made a decided hit. He was followed by Puzzy, who exchanged a few light aspersions with his brother, Bug, and was reprimanded by the chairman, which disturbed him so little that he merely made a hideous face at that functionary before beginning the closing

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argument of the day.

"Fellers and Mister Chairman. I have listened to Bug's argument with surprise, because I thought Bug knew something. It was the foolishhest argument I ever heard in my life (here Bug arose glowering balefully) except Plupy's. (Here Plupy turned scarlet and squirmed in his seat). Where would your books and your newspapers and your schools be if it wasn't for the pen? ("Yah, books aint writin 'with a pen," scornfully shouted Bug, "they are printed.") ("What about a pencil too," sneered Plupy). That shows that neither Bug nor Plupy knows anything more about it than Doc, who don't know anything at all about it. ("I aint goin' to take such sass as that from anybody," said the ordinarily quiet Billy Swett, arising and peeling his jacket and spitting on his hands, in preparation for laying violent hands on Puzzy).

"Nor me neither," declared Bug, casting his hat into the ring and essaying to follow it.

"I'm in this too," declared Whack, a warlike

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gleam in his eye.

Bang! bang! bang! went the gavel, but again discordant voices arose.

"Take it back—I won't—'taint fair—shet up—Rule 1—who cares for your old rules—he'd no business to—no interruption—aint goin' to take no sass—bang! bang! Aw, come on fellers Plupy's father'll be down—oh shet up—come out doors—don't dass to—."

Finally, warlike, demonstrations were quelled, but Puzzy refused to go on unless he could say first what he wished, and the Referee was placed in the embarrassing position of rendering a decision that was bound to be equally unpopular, whichever way the decision went. However, deeming promptness a virtue, he at once decided in favor of the sword, whereupon raucous contumely was showered upon him by Whack, Beany and Puzzy.

"Yah, you always decide in favor of Billy Swett because he has got a horse and a gun," sneered Puzzy.

"You just wait 'till you come up to my house

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*"Help yourself, fellers,"
said Plupy*

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again, see if you get any apples," said Whack.

"You wouldn't have dassed to decide against us if Dennis Co. ly was on our side," affirmed Beany, referring to a recent fight in which Tomtit was reported to have been worsted.

"That's mean," said Doc.

"He can lick you, Beany, and you too Puz," declared Bug with emphasis.

"Help yourselfs fellers," said Plupy, bringing forth a pitcher of sweetened water and a huge tray piled with apples and doughnuts.

And white-winged peace descending, brooded over the battlefield.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Please, ma'am kin I have suthin' for Thanksgivin'?"

THE approach of Thanksgiving, opened up a dazzling prospect of mince, apple, squash and pumpkin pie, chicken, turkey, roast pig, roast goose, nuts, raisins ad libitum, to our friends Pewt, Beany, Plupy, Fatty, Bug, Whack, Puzzy and others, who had on ordinary occasions displayed appetites of most unusual and extraordinary proportions.

The expectations of these lively youths had been kept at fever heat by the daily home preparations for the coming event, and the woefully infrequent opportunities afforded them of snatching *vi et armis* small portions of the raw materials, such as nuts, raisins, brown sugar, dried currants, preserved ginger and mince meat, and escaping through holes in the back fences to avoid maternal reprisals.

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As each boy was in honor bound to equitably divide such plunder among his friends on penalty of being called a pig or a "meany," the frequent interchange of commodities led to speculations over the possibility of anticipating the event by a little dinner of their own.

It was a custom in those days which I am glad to say is practically obsolete to-day, at least in Exeter, for the children of the lower classes to spend the early hours of the night before Thanksgiving in going about the town begging for Thanksgiving supplies. The housewife of the well-to-do class would be called to the door and would find there a boy or girl who would greet her with the time honored request, "please gimme suthin' for Thanksgivin'." Sometimes a few kindly questions would elicit sufficient information to convince the good woman that it would be a real charity to cast a little bread on the waters, and the ordinary result was that the small beggar went away well laden with goodies. Again a severe cross-examination would frequently end in the headlong flight

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of the mendicant and his shrill yells of derision when at a safe distance.

This custom was regarded rather tolerantly by the good people of Exeter, and was not looked upon strictly as begging by those who regularly indulged in it, but rather as a fascinating game of chance. Indeed it was by no means an uncommon thing for children of the better classes to yield to its fascinations and, evading the vigilance of their maternal guardians, to solicit alms with a persistence that in any good cause would have been most praiseworthy, and a fertility of prevarication that was appalling.

With these shining examples in mind it was not surprising that our young friends became interested in any project affording the alluring alternative of excitement and probable gain. And so one rainy Saturday afternoon when they gathered in Fatty's barn and had exhausted the possibilities of "rassling," "knocking off hats," "punching," and that most delightful pastime known as "pilin' on," in which when one of two wrestlers were squarely thrown and was recum-

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bent under the body of the victor, any boy present could by throwing himself on the bodies of the fallen and yelling, "pile on, pile on," at once produce a confused mound of squirming, shouting, struggling boys, whose combined weight crushed the unfortunate victim almost flat, that the conversation turned to the delightful subject of Thanksgiving dainties.

"We are goin' to have a sixteen pound turkey at our house," quoted Bug boastingly. "Huh, that aint nuthin'," chimed in Pewt disdainfully. "We are goin' to have Dal Gilmore's big goose and he weighs most twenty-five pounds, and Ivan and his wife is coming home."

"Yah, goose for Thanksgiving," snorted Whack, resenting the implied superiority of Pewt's household preparations. "Goose is for Crismas, anybody had ought to know that."

"Taint neither," insisted Pewt. "Goose is better and costs more than turkey."

"Dal Gilmore's old goose is more than thirty years old and tuffer'n tripe," scoffed Plupy, not to be behind in the discussion.

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"That shows how much you know about it, old Plupy," sneered Pewt. "A goose gits tenderer and tenderer the longer it lives, jest like a rotten apple."

"Well," concluded Fatty ponderously, "You can have your goose if you want him but I'd ruther have turkey and stuffin'."

"M-m-m," said Beany, drawing in his breath succulently, "jest think of the stuffin' and gravy."

"And the drumsticks," added Puzzy, rolling his eyes heavenward. "And the wishbone and a big piece of the breast," gurgled Billy Swett.

"And the gizzard and the part that goes over the fence last," shrieked Beany, with heightened emphasis.

"How many kinds of pie do you have, Fatty?" queried Plupy of that plump youth, who was regarded as a bon vivant of taste and experience.

"Five," replied Fatty meditatively, and then enumerating with keen enjoyment, "mince, apple, pumpkin, squash and cranberry." "And

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pudding too," he continued reminiscently, "and nuts and raisins and figs," he concluded.

"Gosh," exclaimed his attentive listeners with one accord.

"Don't it jest make you hungry to think of it, fellers?" said Puzzy, heaving a sigh.

"You bet it does," they responded with fervor.

"Do you know what Fatty Melcher did last year?" continued Beany. "He and Pewt went begging and they dressed up in old clothes and they got a lot of cookies and a whole mince pie and a half of a squash pie and a big turnover and they went down back of Fatty's father's shop and et it all."

"Gosh," again exclaimed the boys as the same idea struck them simultaneously, "less we fellers go."

"What if they ketch us?" demanded Plupy anxiously.

"'Twont do any hurt," said Bug, "everybody expects somebody round begging night before Thanksgiving, and they don't care much who it

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is."

"My father would lam the stuffing out of us fellers if he should find it out," said Whack.

"Fatty can't" said Beany, "because everybody would know him."

"I won't do it," said Billy Swett with decision.

"Then 'twill have to be Pewt or Beany or Plupy."

"I won't unless Pewt does too," announced Beany decidedly.

"I'll tell you what," said Fatty. "Pewt and Beany and Plupy can go Wednesday night. Thanksgiving comes Thursday and we will meet here Wednesday night and eat what they get."

"Aw now," scoffed Beany. "I guess you fellers think you are pretty smart to get us to take the risk and do the work and then help us eat it up. I guess not much, Fatty."

"Oh, come now," said Whack. "What is the use of your being so mean about it? They will know Fatty every time, he is so fat, and they will know he don't need nothin'. If my father



Fatty Melcher and Pewt eat it all

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hadn't said he would lick us if he ever heard of our going out begging we would do it. Your father hasn't never said he would lick you for it Plupy, has he? Or yours neither Pewt, or yours, Beany."

The boys addressed admitted that no such injunction had been laid on them, but sagely opined that paternal relations might be a trifle strained in the event of their detection, whereupon the other boys loudly reassured them.

"Course your father wouldn't be mean enough to lick you when they hadn't never told you not to do it," asserted Pile Wood. "I tell you, Whack," said Fatty, in audible tones aside to that gentleman. "It takes a pile of pluck to do it. Plupy and Beany and Pewt is jest the fellers to do it."

"Aw come on now, Plupy," said Bug, "jest think what fun it will be. You can lie so good too," he continued.

"Huh," said Plupy, plainly pleased at the flattering words. "I can't lie so good as Pewt. He can lie jest bully, and Beany can too."

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And so after much urging and specious flattery, the three worthies, Plupy, Beany and Pewt were persuaded to undertake the task, upon the other boys' promise to go with them and hang round in the neighborhood of the houses they were to favor with their patronage. This latter arrangement was a suggestion of Fatty's, who evidently distrusted the generosity of the three in an impartial division of the spoil.

The agreement so pleased that luxurious youth that in order to show his appreciation of their noble conduct, he tip-toed into the kitchen and in the absence of the cook successfully raided the pantry and brought away a squash pie and about a peck of doughnuts stuffed into his pockets, which he distributed with the utmost impartiality.

The next Wednesday evening just after supper the boys met as per agreement at Fatty's barn and arranged for a plan of the campaign. It was deemed advisable that the initial demand should be made at the house of one William Morrill, a most worthy and kindhearted citizen.

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whose only failing was a belief that every man, and in fact every boy, was as honest as he.

Straws were drawn for first chance, and Plupy, always unlucky in games of chance, drew the shortest straw, and in high spirits the boys shinned over the fence and out through Elm to Court street, where the old gentleman lived with his sister, old Mother Moulton, the best natured, talkative old soul in the town.

Plupy, urged on by his friends, approached the door with much diffidence, and in answer to his timid knock the door opened and disclosed the ample figure and wrinkled face of the old lady, peering at him through her iron rimmed spectacles.

"Please gimme suthin' fer Thanksgiving?" stammered Plupy, pulling his hat down over his eyes, while a row of heads peered over the board fence of the school house yard, awaiting with much anxiety the result of negotiations.

"Why, bless your soul, you poor little boy. Come in, come right in," said the kind old lady, vigorously hooking the dismayed Plupy, who

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tried to escape, into the room.

"Now, my poor boy, tell me all about it," she continued, "and take off your hat, it isn't polite to keep your hat on in the house, didn't you know that?"

Thus urged, the desperate Plupy shamefacedly removed his hat, and as he was perfectly well known to the old lady, she instantly recognized him.

"Sakes alive, Harry Shute, if it ain't you. What in the world are you up to such doin's as this for?" she demanded sternly.

Now if Plupy had told her frankly she would have laughed and let him go, but abashed at his position and somewhat terrified at her sternness, he unfortunately tried to lie out of it.

"We ain't goin' to have any Thanksgiving at our house," he said sadly. "We aint goin' to have no turkey, nor mince pie, nor nothin'."

"For mercy sakes, child, what is the matter? Is anyone sick," snapped the old lady on fire with philanthropic zeal.

"No marm," said Plupy, with a sigh, "no-



*"Sakes alive, Harry Shute,
if it aint you," said old
Mother Moulton*

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body is sick, but father has lost his place in the Custom House, and we can't afford any turkey."

"What, George Shute lost his place, and with a wife and seven children to support! I don't wonder you feel pretty bad about it. Does your mother know you are begging?"

"No marm, she wouldn't like it, but I thought if I could get a nice chicken or a nice mince pie, I could leave it in the pantry, and perhaps she might think she had made it."

"Well, Harry Shute, I allus did think you was a no-account sort of boy, but you have got a kind heart, a kind heart," quavered the old lady, wiping her eyes on the corner of her apron. "I'm going right straight down to your house and see your poor dear mother," she continued, greatly to Plupy's discomfiture, who knew that interesting developments would result from her visit.

"I don't believe mother could see you to-night for she went to bed with a awful headache," said Plupy, lying desperately and shamelessly.

"Well, well, well," said the old lady, "they

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are going to have an awful hard time now. Hum, hum," she continued as she packed two mince pies neatly in paper, and filled a paper bag with cookies, and urged them upon the shrinking Plupy, as with many kind words of encouragement she led him out and closed the door behind him, and returning for her shawl and bonnet, made a hurried round of visits through the neighborhood, freely imparting the information that George Shute had lost his place in the Boston Custom House, and what he would do to support a wife and seven children she for her part couldn't imagine, and what was going to become of them all she didn't for the life 'o her know.

Upon his return to the boys, Plupy was greatly troubled over the magnitude of his lies, but the reassuring flattery of the boys and the appetizing smell of the provender soon put him at his ease.

Pewt having drawn the middle straw next applied at the house of George Smith on Elliott street. Unfortunately Pewt was of so ambi-

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tious a nature as to desire above all things to tell a bigger story than Plupy had, and as he was not recognized by Mrs. Smith he began to pour out a pitiful story of how his father and two sisters were down with the small pox, and was elaborating further and harrowing particulars, when he was told to leave or she would have him arrested, the door was slammed in his face with great violence, and a few minutes later a wild-eyed woman with a shawl over her head was acquainting the neighborhood that small pox of the most virulent type had broken out in town and they were all likely to take it before the week was over, and that everybody must take belladonna and fumigate their houses at once, and what would happen next she for her part didn't know.

The boys were somewhat depressed at the barren results of Pewt's first trial, but at the next place, Mr. John Kelley's, having concocted an equally pitiful but less dangerous recital of a poor father dying with consumption, he so excited the kind hearted hostess that he came

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away with a whole roast chicken and an apple pie.

It was now Beany's turn and at the first place he applied he invented a wholly original story. As he was not recognized, he took the opportunity of representing himself as the son of a beloved pastor of the Second Congregational Church, and to disarm suspicion, further informed her with engaging frankness that his father had not been paid any salary since May, and that they couldn't have any Thanksgiving.

Now as this good woman was an ardent supporter of the First Church of the same denomination, and inasmuch as veiled but bitter rivalry had for years existed between the two churches, she lost no time after she had dismissed "the pastor's little son" laden with good things, in putting on her shawl and acquainting the prominent members of the church that the pastor of the Second Church was actually in need of the necessities of life, that his salary hadn't been paid for a year, and that for her part she should think that people who held their heads so high

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as the Second Church people had better pay their minister. That she always thought they were upstarts and that now she knew it.

Now while the boys, affluent in dainties, were hugely enjoying their feast in the rear of Fatty's barn, the most sinister rumors were flying through the little town, to the effect that George Shute had lost his place in the Boston Custom House under very suspicious circumstances, that several cases of small pox had been discovered and that one or two deaths had already occurred; and of the extremely humiliating position in which the pastor of the Second Church was placed by the inability of the parish to meet the demands upon it.

Three such disquieting rumors were sufficient to stir the whole community to a boiling heat, and great was the amazement of Plupy's father the next day at receiving many visits of condolence from his friends, all of whom had already sent in written applications for the supposedly vacant office.

And great was the annoyance of the pastor of

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the Second Church, a most independent and high minded gentleman, at receiving many donations and offers of financial aid from members of the alien congregation.

But the feelings of the harassed and much abused selectmen after spending the early hours of the forenoon in trying vainly to locate the infected district, and to suitably fumigate and effectually quarantine the same, were beyond language vitriolic enough for adequate expression.

Indeed for a long time the source of the information was unknown, but the promised visit of good Mother Moulton gave the first clue to the elder Shute, who promptly acting on this clue elicited from the terrified Plupy sufficient information to implicate Pewt and Beany and they with their respective fathers were promptly summoned to a conference, at which the full nature of their atrocious doings was divulged.

It is doubtful if those three miscreants ever spent a more unhappy day. That they lost their Thanksgiving dinner, which they had for weeks



*Great was the annoyance of the pastor
of the Second Church*

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looked forward to was bad enough, but to be obliged to spend the greater part of that day accompanied by irate parents, in making reiterated apologies and explanations to their victims and the friends to whom they had imparted the information gained, was bitterness itself, and the sound and deserved thrashings they each and everyone received formed the culminating tragedy of a sorrowful and memorable day.

And as the three fathers, weary but triumphant, separated after their energetic search for the truth, they repeated to each other the familiar and oft quoted words, "Did you ever see such cussed boys?"

CHAPTER XVII

With the view of possible Christmas contingencies the boys became deeply and widely religious.

THE Christmas holidays were now nearly at hand. It had been a snowless fall; skating had been good, so good indeed that the boys had almost tired of it. Indeed the hockey games played in the school yard were fully as interesting as and much more prolific in scrimmages than ice hockey.

But Christmas was in the near future and that particular holiday was the burden of their thoughts by day and dreams by night. How to make the most of that holiday was the scheme to which all the ingenuity of their active minds turned.

One morning shortly after Thanksgiving, the elder Shute, father of our friend Plupy, slowly descended the steps of his modest habitation.

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pulling thoughtfully on a cigar, which showed an irritating propensity to burn up on one side. It was a crisp and quiet Sabbath morning, and that gentleman, having seen his numerous family troop off to church, wended his way meditatively towards one of his favorite Sunday retreats, the paint shop of his neighbor, "Brad" Purinton, father of a certain co-miscreant of Plupy, known as Pewt.

As he entered that warm and cosy retreat he found the worthy Bradbury sitting in a rush-bottomed chair and smoking a most virulent clay pipe. His coat, laid aside, disclosed the sleeves of his snowy Sunday shirt, while his feet, ordinarily encased in stout leather boots with much wrinkled legs, were now ornate in gaudy-colored carpet slippers. Opposite him sat the trim looking gentleman who boasted the distinguished paternity of the sinful Beany, smoking a meerschaum with silver trimmings and flecking the dust from polished boots with a snowy handkerchief.

The room contained the assortment of arti-

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cles peculiar to a paint shop. The walls and doors, on which painters had tried their brushes, were daubed with many colored paints and presented the red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet of the rainbow, while colored lithographs of Dolly Bidewell, Morris Brother's Minstrels, Comical Brown, and Washburn's Grand Sensation, were pasted thereon. Scattered around the room were wooden buckets of paint and oil, with half submerged brushes and stirring sticks projecting from them, greasy papers of putty and casks of white lead, while across one side of the shop appeared a long board supported on barrels, covered with rolls of wall paper and broad brushes, under which board stood a pail of flour paste.

By the window stood a carpenter's bench with a wooden vise clamped at its side, while in a wall-rack were bit and bitstock, spokeshaves, chisels, screwdrivers, hand and whipsaws, sandpaper, calipers and paint brushes, dry and stiff with ancient dust and lead.

Evidences of a flourishing business were in

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"Hullo, Brad, Hullo, Wat," said Plupy's father

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sight. On a rack in front of the stove stood a long and very brilliant sign of bright blue sand-ed ground, and golden letters which informed the public that "W. I. Goods, and Groceries" were to be had at lowest prices.

In the back of the shop a pair of wheels in sober garb of dull blue priming, patiently awaited the bright paint, gaudy stripes and daz-zling gold leaf destined for them.

In the place of honor on the wall hung a most patriotic and soul stirring creation, the *chef d'oeuvre* of the artist, in which a most astonish-ingly pigeon-breasted young lady, clad in little but the hectic flush of crimson lake, held aloft with powerful and ruddy-tinted hand a glowing banner of red, white and blue, with folds admir-ably even and measured as if by calipers, while at her side, with out-stretched wings, a glorious and jointless eagle, holding jagged lightning in his claws, shrieked aloud, but whether in defi-ance or horror the artist had neglected to state.

"Hullo, George," slowly drawled Pewt's father, pushing forward an old chair with board

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bottom and wire bound legs, "you look glum, what's wrong? Don't your cigar suit you?"

"Hullo, Brad, Hullo, Wat," replied the father of Plupy. "Cigar's all right. No worse than any of old Si's," he added as he sat down and crossed his legs. "I'm bothered about my little boy," replied Plupy's father thoughtfully.

"Which one, George?" inquired Beany's father with interest, "Frank or the baby?"

"Frankie," replied Plupy's father.

"Whacher call it, George, croup, chicken pox, measels, scarlet fever or what?" asked Brad, opening the stove door and putting in a stick of wood.

"Got an abscess on his back," replied the elder Shute, "mighty bad one, too," he added.

"Whacher do for it?" asked Brad, puffing a cloud of smoke.

"Poultices," replied the elder Shute concisely.

"Too bad," said Brad.

"That's so," said Wat.

For a while they smoked in silence, then Plupy's father threw his cigar away, leaned

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back and said, "But what bothers me is what my oldest boy is up to now?"

"What signals is he flying?" asked Wat, who had contracted nautical expressions from his position in the Portsmouth navy yard. "Can't you make 'em out?"

"No, I can't, hang me if I can," George replied emphatically. "It aint anything so bad that he's doing, only I like to be on my guard, for it may be a case that will require a course at the reform school to cure."

"What d'ye mean? What does he do?" they demanded leaning forward and removing their pipes in their absorbing interest.

"What do you think of his going to three Sunday schools at once?" demanded Plupy's father, leaning back on the bench and tilting his cigar towards the brim of his hat.

To his surprise, both fathers nodded wisely and said in concert, "Just what my boy is doing," and Wat added, "Don't you understand it, George, three Christmas trees and three presents for good behavior."

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"Of course I understand what they are after well enough," replied Plupy's father, "but what I am thinking about is the almighty relapse they will have after the thing is over. You know just how it is, every time those little devils are good for a week, they keep us in hot water for a month to even up things. Aint that so Wat? Aint that so, Brad?"

"Um-m-huh," replied Wat, as he puffed comfortably at his pipe.

"P'tu," replied Brad, as he made a startling accurate shot at the front damper in the stove.

"And then," continued Plupy's father, "think what a combination! Methodist, Congregational and Unitarian. You might as well put a bull-dog, a tom-cat and a parrot in the same box and expect them to agree."

"Um-m-huh," replied Wat, letting the blue smoke curl upwards.

"P'tu," remarked Brad, sending a hissing shot into the crackling flames.

"Well," disgustedly continued Plupy's father, "if that's all you can say about it, there aint

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much use for me to say any more. You remind one of a caucus of paralytics," and he rose to depart.

"Um-m-huh," said Wat, thoughtfully.

"P'tu," replied Brad, meditatively.

"Beats all," said Beany's father, after a pause, "how much trouble the oldest boy of Shute's makes in the neighborhood. Before he came here to live, my boy was as good a boy as I ever saw. But get him with that infernal Shute boy, he is most as bad as he is."

"That's right," said Pewt's father, "never had any trouble with Clarence 'fore that brat of Shute's came here. 'Pears to put the devil into all the boys."

"Takes after his father a good deal," said Beany's father.

"That's so," said Pewt's father.

"Beats all how much George thinks of that little Frankie," said Beany's father.

"Well you know he thinks more of him since he got that bile on his back, because 'Abscess makes the heart grow fonder.' "

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"Um-m-huh," assented Beany's father thoughtfully.

"P'tu," replied Pewt's father, meditatively, and they relapsed into silence.

Now while this brilliant and instructive conference was being held, a few rods away three boys with freshly soaped faces and hair plastered over their foreheads, sat in the vestry of the Unitarian church, singing vigorously and restraining themselves with difficulty from jabbing pins into each other, while they cast frequent glances at the old clock which seemed to them to tick the seconds with dragging slowness.

An hour later the same boys might have been seen vigorously tuning their lusty pipes to the more fervent hymns of the Methodist Sabbath school, while still later in the day their shrill and vociferous singing was the wonder and admiration of their associates in the Sunday school of the Congregational church.

The reason for all this, Wat, had sententiously given. "Three Sunday schools and three

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*The same boys, tuning
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presents for good behavior."

When a short time before Christmas they had ascertained that the Methodist church would probably hold their Christmas festival on Christmas night, the First Congregational on the night before, and the Unitarian the night after Christmas; they decided at once to become members of the Sunday schools of all three organizations. True enough, they already were more or less discredited members of the Unitarian Sunday school, but as they were exceedingly liberal in their religious views, they thought that great good would come from their relations with several churches at once, especially in the Christmas season.

As Beany's family were members of the Congregational parish, Beany occupying a position as blow-boy of the Unitarian church from financial and utilitarian reasons solely, it was easy to secure admission to the first named Sunday school through the kind invitation extended by that pious youth.

Admission to the Methodist school was not

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so easy. Several young Methodists, to whom they applied, were proof against their blandishments, but one day, having artfully enticed one Diddly Colcord, an enthusiastic Christmas Methodist, into Pewt's back yard, they solicited his good offices; but fearful of too liberally watering the stock of Christmas presents by the admission of new members, he rudely refused, whereupon they jointly set upon him and soundly mauled him until he became converted to their views, and loudly and wailingly consented.

And Diddy was as good as his word, and the next Sabbath, with a black eye and damaged nose he ushered them, somewhat abashed, into a class of small, tough looking gamins, evidently new converts.

That three Sunday schools only were joined by the trio was due solely to the fact that the hours of service in other schools conflicted with these, while these three did not conflict in the least with each other.

The Unitarian held their school directly after the morning service, and any benefit that

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children might have derived from the instruction was effectually prevented by the fact that before the end of the school service they were nearly starved from their unaccustomed fasting, the dinner hour in that good old town being at sharp noon.

The Methodist held their Sunday school just after the dinner hour, and pupils after the hearty Sunday dinner were generally in such a condition of turgidity, as to gain little, if any, spiritual uplifting from their instruction.

Again, the First Congregational deferred their Sunday school until after the regular afternoon service, when the pupils who had attended the two prior services were in a state of mental and physical exhaustion that ill-fitted them for their soul's improvement. In the case of our three friends, by the time the afternoon services began, they were in the most irresponsible condition of semi-idiocy.

Indeed, after the last service they were accustomed to tone up their shattered nerves by snow-balling, wrestling and fighting with their

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school-mates, and secretly doing many other things not warranted by their bringing up, and which upon ordinary Sundays we trust that even they would not have done.

As Christmas approached their fervor increased, and they even went so far as to study with some care their Sunday school lesson, and apart from their ludicrous mispronunciation of unfamiliar words and four syllabled names, they acquitted themselves creditably. While the strain on them was great, they consoled themselves with the assurance that it would not last much longer, and the goal of their ambition was already in sight. As it was, the safety valve was under very great pressure.

The Sunday before Christmas, the superintendent of the Unitarian Sunday school made the expected announcement that the usual Christmas festival and tree exercises would be held in the Town Hall on Thursday evening, the day after Christmas, at which the three boys grinned broadly and winked expansively at each other, and when their voices rang out blithely

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in the school songs, they were most favorably looked upon by their teachers, who knew some particulars of their daily life, as brands plucked from the burning.

To rush gleefully home and gobble their dinner and repair expectantly to the Methodist Sunday school required but a short time. But once there, a most astonishing and unlooked for facer awaited them. At the close of the lesson the superintendent, a portly and bulging man in black and shiny broadcloth, ponderously arose and rubbing his hand informed his "De-a-a-r-r-r hea-r-r-rer-r-s" that the teachers of the school and trustees of the church had decided to use the money ordinarily devoted to the Christmas tree festival, for the relief of the heathen, and that to reward the "Dear-r-r" pupils who had so generously given up their enjoyment, a Sunday school concert would be held next Sunday evening, at which all pupils were expected to commit and recite at least four verses of Scripture. At the close of this announcement, the school was dismissed amid a

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horrified silence, which was broken as the scholars dashed noisily down the stairs, when Plupy, Beany and Pewt, each giving the amazed and innocent Diddly Colcord a prodigious punch, fled for home.

But despite their discomfiture, they were promptly on hand at the late service of the Congregational Sunday school, only to have their breath taken away by the harrowing announcement that, owing to the unavoidable absence of the good pastor on the evening usually appointed for the Christmas festival, it would be held in the large vestry on the evening after Christmas.

The disgust and disappointment of our three friends was pitiful. For this they had given the best of their young energies, the best of their fresh voices, the best of their religious attainments. During the long and dreary hour of that session they were dangerously near the verge of mutiny, but restrained their feelings until after singing that harmonious morceau

"We all love one another," they were dis

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missed, when Beany, conscious from their sullen looks that something was in store for him, although he was entirely innocent and as much chagrined as Pewt and Plupy, prudently took to his heels and was pursued to the door of his father's house by his disappointed fellow-conspirators, burning to wreak upon his plump person, the vengeance their disappointed ambition demanded.

And when on Christmas morning instead of the usual knife, or bowgun or book of animals or birds, they each received a New Testament from their amused and admiring relatives, their disgust knew no bounds.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Fire! Fire! A house is on fire
See the firemen run.
It is a crime to set a
House on fire."

—Oldtime Primer.

IT was March. The snow had gone except on the north side of buildings and in sheltered spots. The roads leading to Exeter were seas of mud by day and frozen ruts by night. The sun rose brightly every morning, and the air was balmy, and everyone said: "What a beautiful spring day! It seems as if spring had really come."

At noon the sky became overcast, a piercing northeast wind began to blow directly from the land of icebergs, people resumed their heavy overcoats, scarfs and earmuffs, and solemnly declared that never was there a colder or more backward spring.

In the stores, hoes, rakes, shovels, spades, seed corn and sprouting potatoes were exposed for sale; but even with this encouragement the

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snow squalls alternated with weak, watery sunshine and cold drenching rains. It was a typical New England spring that poets have idealized, raved over, painted in a thousand alluring colors, but which is in reality the coldest, dreariest, most infernal season of the year, freighted with coughs, colds, mumps, measles, sore throats, ear-aches, chilblains, consumption, bronchitis, influenza, chills, fever, wet feet, and countless other evils. A New England spring! Heaven help those who have to endure it. The hottest summer is none too long to get the chills out of one's bones. The coldest, most bracing winter hardly serves to tone one's system to bear the dreadful weeks of a New England spring.

It was midnight and the village was asleep. Plupy was asleep, dreaming of the coming summer. It had been a dull week for everyone, rainy, snowy, cold. It had seemed to Plupy that nothing had ever happened, and he was sure that utter dreariness and stagnation had fallen over the town. But something was going to happen that would bring wild excitement to

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Plupy and to his family.

It was even now happening, but Plupy and his family slept on unconscious.

In the large building next to Plupy's house, occupied as a post office and a dry goods store, the cellar was lighted by a dull red glow. It grew in intensity, and thin spirals of smoke began to creep from the cracks and keyholes. The light increased, the smoke grew thicker, and a dull roar was heard.

Then the bell of the First church began to ring jerkily, excitedly, as if it knew the danger. Someone had seen the fire and rung an alarm. Instantly the town began to wake up, and weird cries were heard, and the clump of heavy boots on the run, as their owners hurried to the engine houses; then the big bell of the Methodist church added its deep tones to the chorus, followed by the brazen clang of the Upper church bell, and the alarm note of the Episcopal. They were all at it now, and everyone was shouting fire! as if nobody else knew it.

What a noise! Plupy woke with a start. He



Pluppy tore into his clothes

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had been dreaming of fire and seemed to have heard the bells in his sleep. He sprang from the bed almost before his eyes were opened. "Bully!" there was a fire. He could see the light. It must be a "ripper" by the noise. He tore into his clothes. He got his trousers on wrong-side-to. What did it matter? His boots, wet the day before, stuck. He pulled until his eyes stuck out, then stamped until the warped and twisted boots were on. They hurt him, but he did not care, there was a fire, a bully one, and pretty near too, for he could see the light. He hoped it would be big one, he hadn't seen a big one for some time.

He could hear his aunt calling excitedly for his father to hurry up and see where it was. He could hear a bustle in the other rooms. Suddenly there was a tremendous pounding on the front door, the hoarse voices shouted, "George, wake up, you're all afire!" Then the pounding was repeated.

Plupy rushed in tremendous excitement to his father's room; his father was loudly calling for

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his trousers. The children began to cry loudly. Plupy's mother was a woman of nerve and coolness. She ordered Plupy's father to guard the front door until they had the children dressed. He rushed down stairs, unlocked the door and shouted to the crowd to wait. A violently excited policeman brandishing a club rushed forward and tried to enter; Plupy's father pushed him back; he rushed again and tried to seize Plupy's father, he received one straight from the shoulder, and went bumping backwards down the steps. Plupy's father owed the policeman a grudge. It was the same policeman that had put Plupy out of the hall the night he was to make a speech. The crowd roared.

Inside, the dressing went on coolly; the procession was formed. Aunt Sarah led the way with the baby and Frankie, the rest followed, holding on to one another. Plupy was allowed to stay behind and save things. His mother also stayed. She was needed. If it had not been for her, there wouldn't have been a thing left unsmashed. Plupy's father was

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saving things, too. He saved some paper dolls and a china dog. Also a little image of "David Praying." He also broke out several windows and cast things out of them. So did the crowd, when Plupy's father did not see them. They were things that would break. Most of them did break.

Plupy's father kept on saving things. He saved a large iron kettle nearly full of apple-sauce. It was good apple-sauce. He carried it a long distance and set it down carefully. He did not throw it through the window as he did the other things. He would have spilled it if he had, and then again the kettle might have hit someone and hurt him. It did not make so much difference with the bureau, or the pitchers, or the glass globe or the lamps.

In the meantime the fire was gaining ground. Round the corner from Front street came a long line of men on a run, dragging the old hand tub "Fountain," they swung round a short turn. The engine struck the curbing, tipped and went over. The men rushed back, shouting and

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swearing, and the fire roared. From the other direction came the "Torrent." They backed her to the big cistern, ran out the hose, the men manned the brakes, "zoonka-zoonka" went the engine, the nozzle men stood ready, there was no water.

"What's the matter?" shouted the nozzle men.

The pumpers stopped. They had forgotten to let down the suction pipe. A dozen men sprang to do it, there was a crash of rotten boards and the top of the cistern gave way. Four men went through. They rose to the surface, gasping, and were dragged out dripping. There was great excitement and the fire roared merrily.

The old "Piscataqua" was late. She had farther to go and two horses to help. They were a great help, they carried the engine at great speed. They usually got to a fire first. This night they were a new pair of horses. They ran with great swiftness, faster even than the other horses, but they ran the wrong way and

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Round the corner came a long line of men

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the driver could not stop them for a long time.

When the "Piscataqua" got to the fire the "Fountain" had been pried up and had got a stream on. So had the "Torrent." The men were pumping for their lives. Bucket lines had been formed, and the thud and tunk of leather buckets on heads made apparently of the same material was heard above the roar of the fire. So were the indignant remarks of the victims.

The bells were still ringing. They were determined everyone should know there was a fire. Some of the people may not have known it. Some of them acted as if they did not. Most of them worked hard to put out the fire and save things. Plupy's father was very active in saving things. The last thing he saved was Plupy's boat. It was in the cellar. The cellar was rapidly filling with water and the boat might have got wet. So Plupy's father saved it. It was the last thing saved. Everything else had been saved and smashed but the tacks in the carpets. They had been left in the floor with little bunches of carpet under them.

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The piano had also been saved. All but the legs. They had been chopped off with axes, Old Sam Brown and Jethro Holt had cut them off. They knew how to cut down trees. They could cut a large tree down in five minutes. They cut down the piano in less time than that, much less. They were strong men. Plupy's mother cried about the piano. She had learned to play on it when she was a girl. They could have unscrewed the legs. She said so.

By this time the postoffice building had fallen down. There was nothing else to burn but the stone foundations and they would not burn. Lucy Boardman's shed had also burned down. They had pulled part of it down with poles and hooks. So all the streams were turned on Plupy's house, and the axmen chopped great holes in the roof to see if there was any fire there, and then they stuck in the nozzles and filled the house with water.

Some of the neighbors made hot coffee and passed it to the firemen. They also passed black bottles around, not the neighbors but fire-

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Bucket lines had been passed.

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men. Some of them staggered, they were so tired, and one or two fell down exhausted. As soon as their places were taken by fresh men, they would go into the hotel near by to rest. They all went into the bar-room, because they could rest better there.

By-and-by they put out the fire. It was nearly morning then and quite light.

Plupy and his father went into the house. It was not very badly burned, but the plastering had all fallen down and the paper was peeling from the walls. The insurance men came and talked with Plupy's father. He said the house wasn't worth a red cent. They said it was in pretty good condition, considering.

Plupy's mother had gone down to Aunt Clark's where the children were. Plupy got permission to go down to Ed Towle's to stay to breakfast. Plupy was having a good time, he felt rather important because it was his father's house that had burned, and he thought Lizzie Towle, Ed's sister, would think he was quite a fellow. Beany wanted him to come to his house

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and Plupy had promised to make him a visit of a week after he had finished his visit at Ed's.

After breakfast Plupy returned to the house, and helped remove such furniture as was not entirely ruined, to storage in Beany's barn. Pewt helped him and so did Pop and Bill and Bug, Whack, Puzzy, Tady, Skinny, Diddly, Pile, Skippy and his other friends.

They were very kind and sympathetic with Plupy. It was a dreadful thing to be burned out and lose everything.

Plupy fully appreciated his position and did his best to be solemn, melancholy and sad. As he contemplated the ruins he passed the back of his hand across his eyes and mournfully shook his head, and looked heroic and resigned.

It was really very hard to play the part of a crushed martyr, for Plupy was having the best time he ever had in his life. He told again and again to an ever widening circle of listeners, how he had heard the bells and jumped from his bed, feeling sure that the time had come to play the man; how he had rushed through the

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rooms awakening the family; how he had told his sisters not to be scared, that he would look out for them; how he had saved the most valuable things, and had lifted weights that in sober moments he could not have stirred from the floor; how he had directed the firement just where the fire was under the coving and where to cut the holes to insert the nozzle; how the hose burst right under him, and the flames almost cut him off, but he had stayed until everyone had safely got out.

We must not criticise Plupy too harshly. He was an imaginative youth, and the fact that he was temporarily occupying the center of the stage had in a measure unsettled his judgment, that was all. Pewt openly scoffed at Plupy's stories and told him what he had done, and how Plupy might have done much better, "if he had known anything." But Pewt was so evidently jealous and unfair that he was told to "shet up," and he went away in huge disgust.

Plupy's father was conferring with the insurance men. He was much depressed by his se-

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vere losses. They were much greater than the insurance men were willing to acknowledge. The insurance men were not fair, so Plupy's father said. Plupy's father was trying to magnify his loss beyond all sense or reason, so the insurance men said. Plupy's father put the case to them as fair men, willing to pay what they agreed to do under the terms of their policies. They put the case to him as an upright man, who only wanted what was right and fair, man to man.

The day passed; crowds of people visited the ruins. One engine was still in attendance, playing on the post office safe. It was still too hot to be opened, and steamed when the water struck it. The postmaster had opened a temporary office in the west room, ground floor of the hotel. The reporter for the local paper interviewed Plupy's father, and estimated his loss at a most appalling figure. He also interviewed the insurance men and they were much impressed at his remarks. He told the insurance men that he wanted to say in his report for the

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Plupy's father was conferring with the insurance men

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paper that "The adjusters of the ——— Insurance Company and of the ——— Insurance Company, two of the soundest, most liberal and at the same time conservative companies now doing business in America, settled matters with Mr. Shute on a far more liberal basis than the strict letter of their policies allowed." That "it is such treatment that assures the confidence of the public and the success of the companies." That "the adjusters, Messrs. Blank and Zero, commend their local agents, Messrs. Cypher and Nought, to the public and grateful for past favors solicit a continuance of the same."

The reporter for the local paper was a great friend of Plupy's father, and had conferred earnestly with him before the insurance men had arrived. He assured the insurance men that his report would be published in the Boston papers. The insurance men conferred again with Plupy's father. The matter was compromised. Certain papers were filled out and signed by the insurance men and by Plupy's father.

Plupy's father returned to his family. He

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was met on the way by sympathetic friends, who told him how sorry they were to learn of his great loss. He thanked them, sighed deeply, and said the insurance companies had been very square and liberal with him, but that there was a sentimental value attached to household goods that no money could fully compensate.

But there was a satisfied look in his eyes, his step was elastic and he gave Plupy a ten cent scrip, which was a sure sign that his mind was at peace.

That night and for a week after, Plupy stayed at the American House, kept by Ed Towle's father. There was a large stable attached to the house. There was a billiard hall in front of the stable. Plupy had promised his mother not to go into the billiard hall. But there was a great deal to see besides that. It was almost as lively a place as Major Blake's.

After his visit to Ed's was over, he went to Beany's for a week. A week of constant fun and skirmish. From the moment they awoke in the morning they had a pillow fight, which

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raged furiously until breakfast time. After breakfast they wrestled and skirmished until fairly driven from the house to school. They chopped kindlings with delight and in friendly rivalry. They drew water from the well with the old fashioned chain and windlass, and slopped it over each other.

Plupy's father hired another house until his house was repaired and Plupy had to help move. It was vacation again for two weeks. Beany helped him and they would load up a dingle cart with furniture and drive Nellie up to the new house, which was on Lincoln street, nearly a mile from where he had always lived. Then they would return for another load and would always race with everyone on the road. This saved time and made fun for them. It was not so much fun for the other people because Nellie was a fast trotter, the old dingle cart rattled tremendously, and the boys yelled as loud as they could. People were not pleased, but they could not catch the boys.

By-and-by all the furniture was moved, and

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the family went into the new house. The people in the neighborhood, where Plupy had always lived, were very sorry to lose the Shutes. Some of them cried. They did not feel badly to lose Plupy. Some of them said so. Pewt's father said so, and so did Beany's. They thought a great deal of Pewt and Beany. It was fortunate for Pewt and Beany that Plupy moved. Perhaps it was for Plupy. What do you think?



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